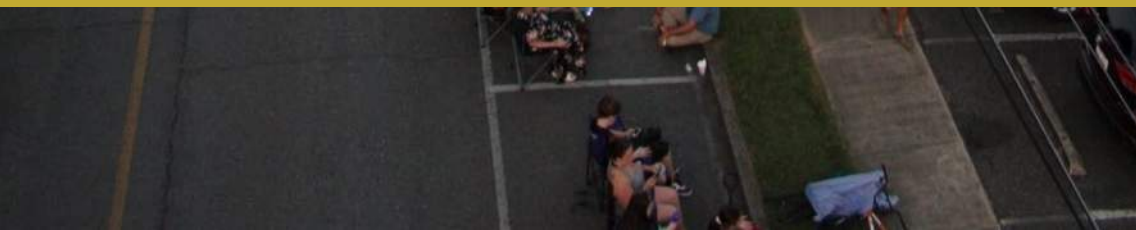




Town of Dallas

# Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Plan

2026



## Acknowledgments

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*A special thank you to all of the participants who took their personal time to provide feedback and input during the planning process. This document has been prepared by WithersRavenel on behalf of the Town of Dallas, NC. Reproduction or distribution of this document and its contents are prohibited without approval of the Town of Dallas. All contents of this document are the property of the Town of Dallas.*



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**1**

# ***Introduction***

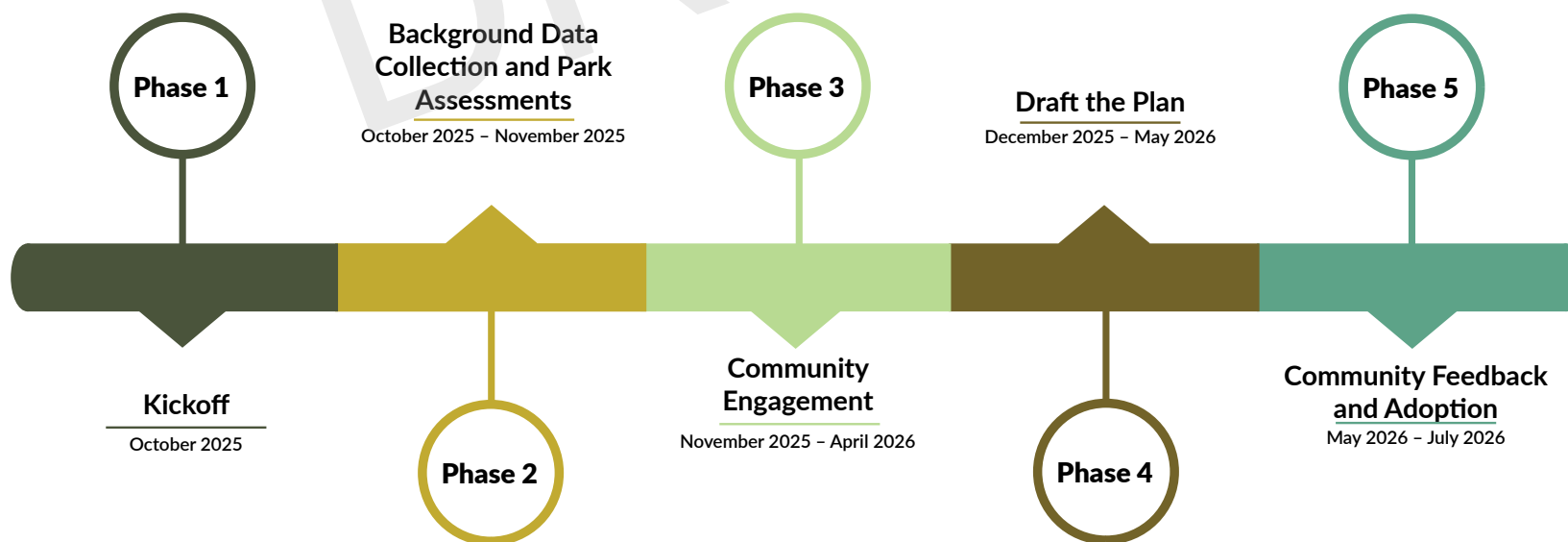
## Purpose & Process

### This Plan's Purpose

The Dallas Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a holistic, long-range planning document, that provides direction on the development and delivery of the Town's Parks and Recreation department and system over the next 10 years. This plan brings forward relevant ideas from past planning efforts and blends them with up-to-date department and community goals to create a guiding vision for the Town. As a result, recommendations with associated priority levels are included and are intended to serve as direction for the community as a whole.

### Process

As for any successful plan, this Master Plan is built on input from the community. That includes the Town's Parks and Recreation Staff, appointed and elected officials, as well as the community at large. In order to effectively engage with the Dallas community, the Project Team began the plan creation process by reviewing past efforts, understanding existing conditions through available data and boots-on-the-ground evaluations. This was followed by multiple public input sessions, including both a virtual survey, and workshop events. With the Project Team having both an understanding of opportunities for the Dallas Parks and Recreation system and community desires, a plan vision statement was formed, guiding this plan's recommendations. The process creates a road map outlining how items can be achieved. This reflects the implementation component of this plan, which outlines associated priority levels for each recommendation and funding opportunities to bring them to life.





**2**

***Previous Plan  
Analysis***

## Continuing Momentum

The Town of Dallas and partners in the region have spent a good deal of time, energy, and money into past planning efforts that require revisiting before the drafting of this plan. Ideas within the planning efforts detailed further below may still be relevant today, and if not, it is necessary to learn why. This section will provide information on the following policy and regulatory documents as they relate to Dallas Parks and Recreation and specifically, this Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- » Dallas Park (Gaston County) Master Plan (2013)
- » Gaston County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2017)
- » Town of Dallas 2030 Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2022)
- » Town of Dallas Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2022)
- » Town of Dallas Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) Strategic Plan (2025)
- » Dallas Unified Development Ordinance
- » ADA Transition Plan (2020)



### ***Dallas Park (Gaston County) Master Plan (2013)***

In 2013, Dallas Park, owned and operated by Gaston County, had been serving the community but its facilities were beginning to age and it was time to reimagine the ~100 acre regional park. The primary purpose of the 2013 plan was to give elected officials and Gaston County staff a guide for future park improvements based on input from the community blended with an analysis of existing conditions. Ultimately, the Dallas Park Master Plan included internal walking trails throughout the park, reconfigured existing ball fields with a centralized restroom facility and concession stands, added a defined multi-purpose field, a splash pad with an additional restroom facility, additional surface parking to accommodate the increase in users due to facility additions, programmed the northern pond to include a fishing pier, and added a multi-purpose building. Fast forward to today, Dallas Park has brought some of these proposed elements from 2013 to life. A splash pad, reconfigured ball fields, and the multipurpose building still are yet to exist in this space.

Evaluating this Gaston County park is important as part of the Dallas Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan because it outlines what recreation offerings exist in the immediate vicinity of Dallas' town limits. Understanding how Dallas' efforts can compliment those of Gaston County is an important element of this plan.

### ***Gaston County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2017)***

In 2017, the County updated its parks and recreation master plan which aimed to guide park and facility development, along with evaluating programming and operational needs through 2026. This plan built upon Gaston County's prior master plan in 2007, which put forward \$34 million in park improvements. Backed by a public engagement process, this plan identifies key priorities from the community such as expanding new parks, greenways and trails, specifically the Carolina Thread Trail and South Fork River access, and enhancing ADA access across County offerings. In conclusion, the plan focused on both improving the recreation parks Gaston County currently offers while also assessing future parkland acquisition to accommodate a growing population.

Assessing this 2017 plan is important in understanding how the County's recreational facilities and programs may complement nearby municipal efforts and seeing where room for intergovernmental collaboration exists.

### ***Town of Dallas 2030 Comprehensive Land Use Plan***

The Town of Dallas' 2030 Comprehensive Land Use Plan was adopted in 2022, and puts forward a vision for the Town as it grows over the next 8 years. Important to note, this plan analyzed beyond the typical boundary of a municipal comprehensive plan, which is commonly the corporate limits and extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and looked at a 11.25-square mile study area instead. The reason this is worth noting is due to the fact that recreational offerings, specifically, Gaston County's Dallas Park falls within this study area for the 2022 plan. Like most comprehensive plans, Dallas' looks at many existing and future conditions of a community, not limited to housing, demographics, infrastructure, economic development, land use, and most importantly to this effort, parks and recreation.

As it relates to this effort, the plan brings forward the following policy recommendations related to parks, recreation, and cultural events:

- » 2.4.1 -- Investigate the suitability of various sites as a community event venue.
- » 2.4.2 -- Host more reoccurring town events, such as the Christmas parade.
- » 2.4.3 -- Strategically plan for how to utilize the new Gaston Aquatic Center for events & tourism; specifically, pursue hotel development opportunities.
- » 3.1.1 -- Coordinate with the Gaston County ADA Coordinator to ensure ADA compliance at intersections and along sidewalks.
- » 3.1.2 -- Establish enhanced pedestrian connections between downtown and key recreational facilities and activity centers, such as Dallas Park.
- » 3.2.1 -- Continue to pursue the development of a Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan for the Town.
- » 3.2.2 -- Revise development regulations to encourage or require bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure with new residential and commercial development.
- » 4.1.1 -- Codify the Town's Development Ordinance to require trail easements with future development proposals where applicable.
- » 4.1.2 -- Plan for future Carolina Thread Trail connections to Dallas Park, residential neighborhoods, and public facilities.
- » 4.1.3 -- Assess minimal open space requirements in Development regulations; increase the required percentage and include in all zoning districts.
- » 4.2.1 -- Coordinate with local, state, and federal partners to leverage funding for bike lanes, sharrows and multi-use paths.
- » 4.2.2 -- Plan for Rail-Trail multi-use paths in coordination with regional mobility plans such as the Carolina Thread Trail.
- » 4.2.3 -- Plan for infrastructure supportive of multi-modal transportation systems such as wayfinding, lighting and fencing where appropriate.
- » 4.2.4 -- Coordinate with Gaston County to make improvements to Dallas Park, and to produce an updated Dallas Park Master Plan if necessary.
- » 4.2.5 -- Implement Dallas Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- » 4.3.1 -- Conduct and utilize planning studies to apply for grant funding to revitalize existing recreational facilities.

### ***Town of Dallas Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2022)***

The Town of Dallas Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was created to identify bicycle and pedestrian improvements within Dallas' town limits to accommodate a growing population and list specific recommendations and segments for bike lanes, paths, and sidewalks to places of interest within Dallas and connectivity on a regional scale. The plan was guided by 5 goals which read as follows:

- » Goal #1: Increase access to walking and bicycling
- » Goal #2: Improve safety for all pedestrians and bicyclists
- » Goal #3: Promote economic development and livability through walking and bicycling
- » Goal #4: Expand education and awareness programs for walking and bicycling
- » Goal #5: Strengthen connections between different modes of transportation

As part of this Dallas Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, walkability and bikeability is assessed with specific recommendations from the 2022 plan considered.

### ***Town of Dallas Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) Strategic Plan (2025)***

This 5-year strategic plan is focused on identifying opportunities for economic growth through outdoor recreational offerings in Dallas. A total of 48 recommendations are outlined and categorized by 3 different priority areas which include:

- » Outdoor Infrastructure
- » Communication & Activities
- » Economic Impacts & Business Support

The most important component of this plan is the workplan it puts forward. This workplan outlines Goals, objectives, and actions that were identified throughout the planning process and provides a comprehensive list for Dallas staff and leadership to reference throughout budgetary considerations and future land development, both private and public.

The CORE plan was highly important document to revisit throughout the creation of this Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as it allowed the Project Team to revisit recent ideas related to recreation and tourism and ultimately build upon ways to implement them.

## **Dallas Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)**

The Town of Dallas is currently in the process of updating its development standards in the form of its UDO, a process referred to as Design Dallas. This ordinance will aim to incorporate recommendations from the 2022 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, including open space enhancements for new subdivisions along with increased trail and general multimodal elements as new development moves forward.

In Dallas' current development regulation, the only park-related requirement involves the Board of Aldermen's right to require no more than 10% of total land as part of a Major Subdivision to provide space for a park, fire station, police station or library for a period of up to one year after the final plat has been recorded. Additional development regulation considerations to move forward the parks and recreation system of Dallas are explored further in this plan.

*At the time writing this Dallas Parks & Recreation Plan, the UDO was being reviewed by Town staff. Two changes relevant to open space preservation and recreation include the following:*

*Revised lot standards require a minimum percentage of lot area to be preserved as open space, varying between 10 percent (for residential or nonresidential development) and 50 percent (for conservation subdivisions). This requirement encourages prospective developers to consider site layout and creation of spaces suitable for active or passive recreation.*

*A new section, Section 6.8 Open Space Set-Aside and Parkland, sets design standards for open space set-asides; defines situations requiring passive space, gathering space, or active space; and identifies permitted features and amenities.*

## **ADA Transition Plan**

In 2019, Dallas' parks and recreation facilities were evaluated from a ADA accessibility standpoint. Dallas is fortunate to have this data as it assists the community in identifying priority items to make the Town's park offerings more accessible.

During the Project Team's park assessments which are detailed further in this document, ADA accessibility concerns for Dallas' parks were identified which align with the findings of this 2019 work. Ultimately, the recommendations of this Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan will complement the efforts from 2019 and continue moving the town forward with respect to ADA compliance.



# 3

## ***Community Characteristics***

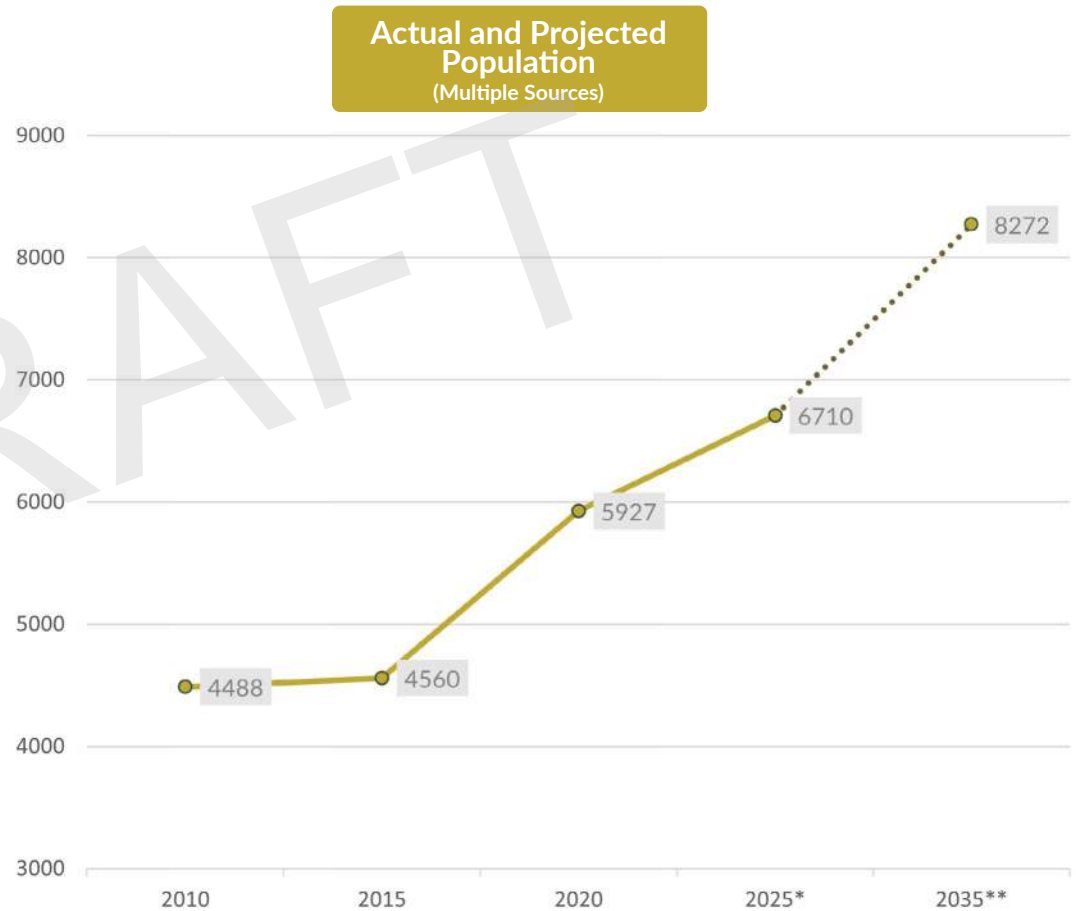
## Demographic Analysis

Assessing the demographic trends of Dallas provides valuable insight into the community’s characteristics and helps identify considerations that will influence the future of parks and recreation. Understanding core demographics and population growth patterns allows for more targeted and strategic planning of recreational amenities and services. By aligning the needs of current and future residents with available resources, the Town can ensure that parks, green spaces, and recreational facilities are accessible, diverse, and capable of meeting the evolving demands of the community. This demographic analysis serves as a foundation for crafting sustainable, inclusive, and forward-thinking parks and recreation strategies.

Demographic information was obtained from the American Community Survey (ACS), which is a yearly survey produced by the United States Census. Similar to the decennials census, the ACS provides information about community characteristics every five years, with the most recent data provided for the year 2023. Data was pulled from 2023 and 2018 to show 5-year trends in Dallas characteristics. Additionally, the Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) and Dallas’ 2023 Water Supply Plan were used to project the Town’s future growth.

### Population Projection

Dallas experienced a population boom in 2020, with a population growth of 23%. This growth has perpetuated over the last 5 years with an additional 11.7% growth projected between 2020 and 2025 according to data from the Office of State Budget & Management. The Town’s population is projected to reach 8,272 by 2035 according to the Town’s 2023 Water Supply Plan, which evaluates community growth in relation to utility demand. Dallas’ growth highlights the importance of benchmarking the community’s offering against national standards to help identify meaningful areas for growth to support existing and incoming recreation users.



\* Based on Population & Growth Rates from 2024 OSBM and 2023 ACS.

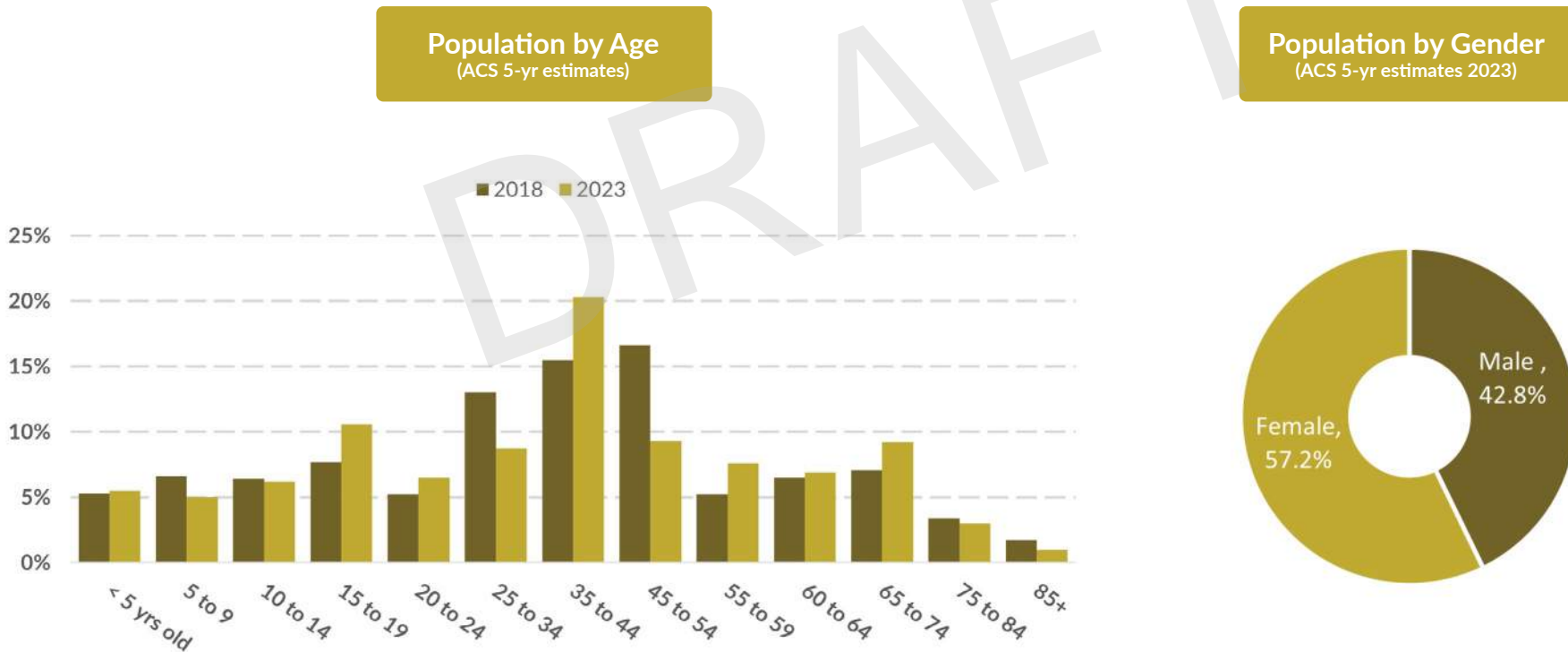
\*\* Based on Dallas, NC Water Supply Plan Population Projections for 2030 & 2040.

### Age

Overall, the Dallas community is getting slightly younger. Median age dropped by about 1 year to a median community age of 38.8 in 2023. Residents under 18 have slightly decreased since 2018, while residents 65 and over have slightly increased. The most notable changes in age cohorts occurred in the 45–54-year-old cohort (-7.3%), 35–44-year-olds (+4.8%), and 25–34-year-olds (-4.3%). Demographic changes related to community age do not require specific programming considerations outside of ensuring opportunities for all age cohorts are present in Dallas.

### Gender

Dallas is unique in that approximately 57% of the population is female. While recreation planning does not lean on gender as a strong indication of recreation preferences, it should be noted that Dallas' male-to-female ratio illustrates a unique element of the community in 2023.

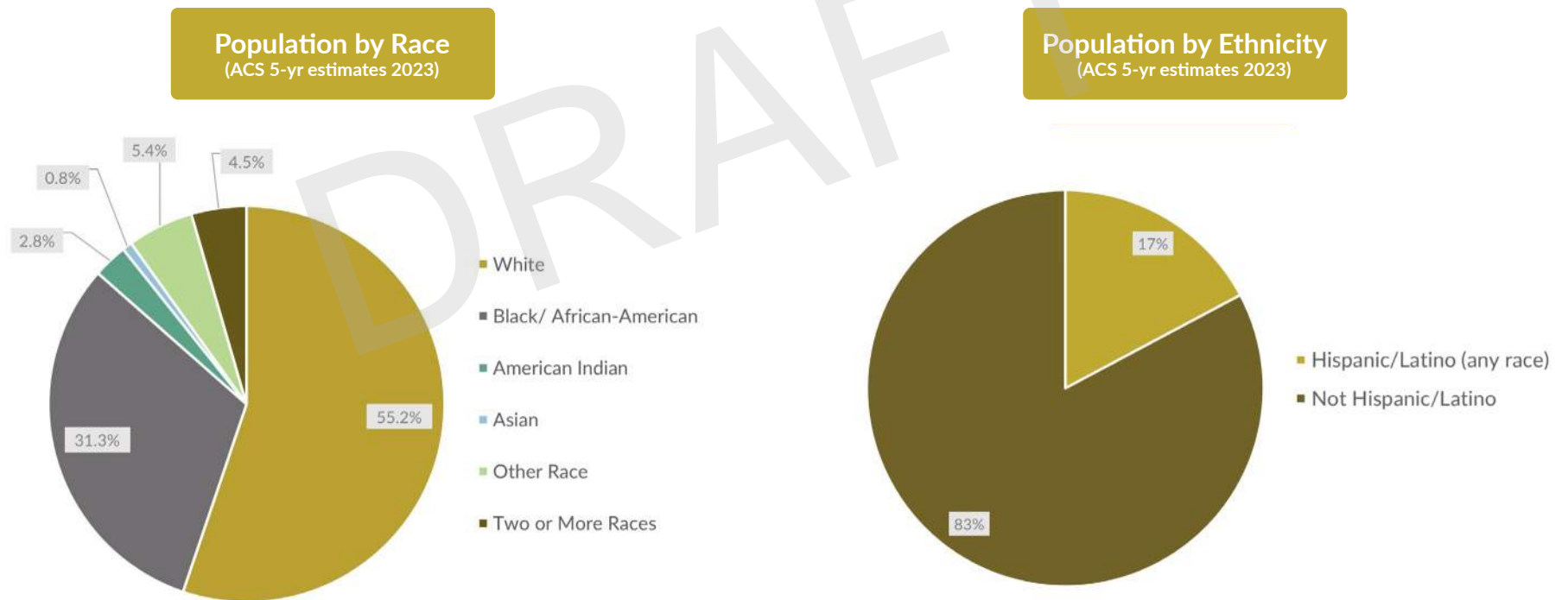


### Race & Ethnicity

Resident racial cohorts have been very dynamic in recent history. In 2017, Dallas reflected a racial makeup that is similar to many North Carolina communities, with 74% of the population identifying as “White”. In 2023, only 55.2% of the population identifies as “White” with 31.3% identifying as “Black or African-American” with American Indian and other races also experiencing increases.

Similar to the community’s racial diversification, Hispanic/Latino populations in Dallas approximately doubled between 2017 & 2023. Dallas’ Hispanic/Latino population now represents approximately 17% of the overall community.

Understanding that Dallas has diversified highlights the importance of far-reaching, genuine community engagement as part of plan development. Staff and the Project Team must continue to ensure that community feedback represents all users of the Dallas Parks & Recreation network.



### Income

Dallas residents have experienced a large increase in income since 2017. **Median income for the community has risen by almost 56% from \$37,048 in 2017 to \$57,755 in 2023.** In addition to the lower income cohorts decreasing significantly the \$50,000 to \$74,999 and \$100,000 to \$149,999 cohorts both experienced over 8 percentage point increases within Dallas.

**Median Income in Dallas, NC**  
 Source: American Community Survey (2023)  
**\$57,755**  
**(55% increase from 2017)**

Additional resident income can impact recreation planning significantly. While on one hand, additional resident incomes can be associated with greater investments into Town facilities and offerings, it can also mean that Dallas will compete more against private recreation providers or external municipal or county providers.

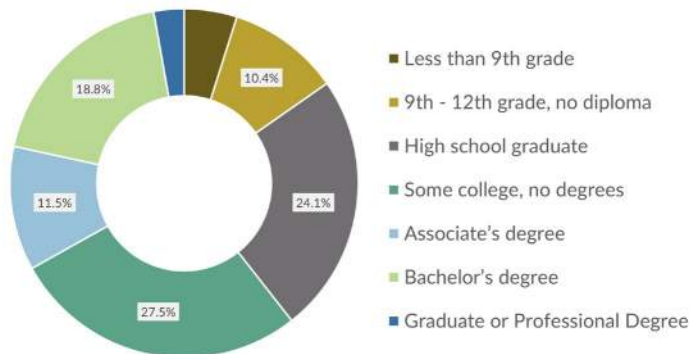
### Education

Commonly associated with resident income, educational attainment in Dallas has also increased. 84.7% of residents are high school graduates and 21.6% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or more. This reflects a 12.3 percentage point increase in high school attainment and a 10.2 percentage point increase in higher education attainment over the past five years of data.

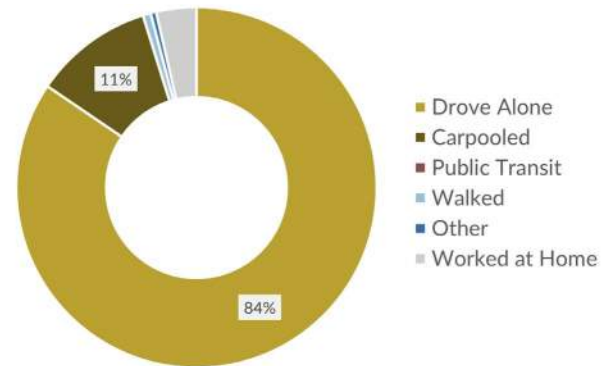
### Mode of Commute

Commuting characteristics changed little over the past 5-years of data. Increases in walking, biking, and working from home may otherwise have implications for the recreation network, but the data collected does not indicate any significant changes in commuting patterns of Dallas residents.

**Educational Attainment**  
 (ACS 5-yr estimates 2023)



**Mode of Commute**  
 (ACS 5-yr estimates 2023)





Summer Concert Series & Cruise-In. Credit: Town of Dallas



# **4** *System Evaluation*

## Park Evaluations

This section provides a detailed overview of Dallas' parks and recreation system, including current facilities, programs, and services managed by the department. The Town oversees two parks, a gymnasium, and operates/maintains facilities owned by the County Board of Education. Popular amenities include the community's various baseball diamonds, Dallas' basketball programming, various playground facilities, and yearly special events. Town facilities serve both residents and visitors, offering diverse recreational opportunities. This section reviews the evaluation of existing conditions, amenities, and functionality of each site while considering their alignment with community needs.

Members of the Project Team visited each of the Town's park facilities to evaluate the existing conditions and their overall quality. The Project Team used criteria developed in part from the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating impactful public spaces and bringing communities together.



Jagers Park Playground. Credit: WithersRavenel

The following questions were answered for each facility in Dallas:

***Design, Construction, & Effectiveness***

- » Is the design and construction of this site appropriate for the needs of users served?
- » Is the site readily accessible by pedestrians/cyclists from the surrounding neighborhood (i.e. - non-automobile)?
- » Is the site accessible to users of all ability levels including but not limited to mobility impaired or handicapped?
- » Does the site utilize cohesive design standards (for branding, materials, wayfinding, etc.)?
- » Does the site have features/amenities that can be used by people of different ages?
- » Do site facilities function and are they easy to use?
- » Does the site display a balance of active recreation intensities and passive or at-will opportunities?

***Comfort, Appearance, & Safety***

- » Does the site make a good first impression?
- » Are there enough places to sit and conveniently located?
- » Is the site being regularly and sufficiently maintained and is clean and free of litter?
- » Considering safety, are activities within the site visible within and around the site?
- » Does vehicular traffic around or within the site impact user enjoyment?
- » Does the site need upkeep or improvements?

***Access and Linkages***

- » Are there clear and open view lines into open spaces?
- » Is there clear, useful, and adequate wayfinding/signage within the site?
- » Can people walk easily to the site from surrounding areas?
- » Do paths and/or roads connect people to primary amenities?

### ***Sociability and Sustainability***

- » Does the site provide places for people to gather?
- » Does the site provide opportunities and or resources to promote active, healthy lifestyles?
- » Does the site promote educational awareness of the history of the property (if there is any)?

### ***Environmental Sustainability***

- » Does the site use energy, water, and material resources efficiently?
- » Does the site treat stormwater from a larger area than itself or otherwise improve water quality?
- » Does the site use varied vegetation and/or contain biological diversity?
- » Does the site enhance environmental awareness or knowledge through signage or educational material?

### ***Economic Sustainability***

- » Does the site generate public and/or private revenue or is there a user fee?
- » Does the site contain or require full-time employees?



Cloninger Park. Credit: WithersRavenel

It is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all set of criteria that can accurately evaluate every type of park. However, seeing each individual park's score and system-wide scores allows for the identification of unique trends and a general comparison of parks within the system. With the answers to these questions in hand each park was assigned to one of the following categories: **Exceeding Expectations**

These are generally defined as parks with new/enhanced facilities that are easily accessible. Facilities are comfortable, varied, and users feel safe. High levels of maintenance and care are evident with parks exceeding expectations. Example characteristics of parks that exceed expectations include the following:

- » The space provides a wide variety of uses.
- » Facilities function as intended and are exceptionally well maintained, aesthetically pleasing, and feel safe.
- » The park shows clear evidence of good design standards.
- » There are many ways to access the park, including walking and biking.
- » Multi-purpose fields or lawn surfaces could be considered tournament/competition grade.
- » Sports fields may contain premium amenities such as score boards, enclosed dugouts, bleachers, and lighting.

***This type of park scores in the 75-100 range.***

#### ***Meeting Expectations***

These are generally defined as parks with adequate facilities that are serviceable for the needs of the community. Parks meeting expectations are reasonably maintained, provide differing recreational facilities, and are considered reasonably accessible. Example characteristics of parks that meet expectations include the following:

- » Parks and facilities function as intended.
- » The park can accommodate several different activities.
- » The park is generally well-maintained.
- » Facilities are somewhat accessible either by biking or walking.
- » Field surfaces are well maintained and playable, but typically do not include the premium features that may be present in a park that "exceed expectations."

***This type of park scores in the 50-74 range.***

### **Not Meeting Expectations**

These are generally defined as parks with facilities or features that have exceeded their functional life span and/or need enhancement to provide functionality for the public. Parks not meeting expectations are often difficult to access and may not feel safe for user. These facilities may also exhibit a maintenance level insufficient to continue to provide the desired uses and recreational access. Example characteristics of parks that do not meet expectations include the following:

- » The park is not currently performing as intended.
- » The park may not be perceived as safe by its users.
- » The park has a consistent low level of activity.
- » The park may only be accessible by personal automobile.
- » Field surfaces are not typically well maintained, or the fields are over-programmed and maintenance is impossible.

***This type of park scores in the 0-49 range.***

In addition to evaluating overall park experiences as part of this assessment, the Project Team also evaluated the conditions of individual facilities within each park and collected GIS data points that logged location and condition attributes in real time. Condition scores are representative of the following:

<b>Quality</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Poor</b>	<b><i>The facility is in need of repair, renovation, or removal.</i></b>
<b>Fair</b>	<b><i>Facilities that currently serve a purpose and do not pose safety concerns but should be considered for up-fitting.</i></b>
<b>Good</b>	<b><i>Up-fitting is not necessary and the facility is in acceptable condition.</i></b>
<b>Very Good / Brand New</b>	<b><i>The facility is in excellent conditions.</i></b>

# 1. Dennis Franklin Gym

Address: 208 W Church St, Dallas, NC 28034

The Dennis Franklin Gymnasium is a special place that is rich in history and a major asset for the Town of Dallas. This space is home to the Parks and Recreation Department offices and offers seating for 500+ on one side of the gymnasium that is elevated approximately 4' feet from court level. The gym hardwood was resurfaced approximately 2 years ago and is waxed annually to maintain that investment. Concessions and restrooms are offered in this space, although ADA accessibility concerns are present. Outside of the gymnasium itself is an approximately 0.15-acre fenced children's playground facility, which features relatively new mulch surfacing, aging playground equipment, a new single-post cantilever umbrella, a funnel ball goal, two picnic tables, two benches, and swings that accommodate infants and young children.



Park Facility	Condition
Playground	Fair
Basketball Court	Good
Picnic Shelter / Pavilion	Very Good / Brand New
Bench (Outdoor)	Fair

Overall Park Experience Scoring	
Design, Construction & Effectiveness	29
Comfort, Appearance, & Safety	24
Access and Linkages	18
Sociability and Sustainability	9
Environmental Sustainability	8
Economic Sustainability	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>

### Project Team Observations

- » While the overall facility experience remains high, ADA Accessibility within and to the gymnasium is insufficient.
- » Additional shade structures, both built and natural could enhance the appeal of this downtown park.

Exceeds Expectations

# 2. Cloninger Park

Address: 305 W Church St, Dallas, NC 28034

Situated just south of Church Street from Dennis Franklin Gymnasium is this approximately 3.39 acre park. Cloninger Park offers a large multipurpose field, primarily used for youth soccer games and practices. Cloninger also features paved surface parking, two portable restroom facilities, a covered pavilion available to rent for events, a multi-slide playground with mulch surfacing, 5 perimeter benches, a 0.25-mile paved walking track, and sports lighting. This park displays another downtown recreational offering in Dallas, with good connection to surrounding residences.

At the time of this report, Dallas Parks & Recreation introduced a new “Movies in the Park” event series to be held at Cloninger Park in the summer of 2026.



Park Facility	Condition
Playground	Fair
Picnic Shelter / Pavilion	Good
Multi-Purpose Field	Good
Bench (Outdoor)	Very Good / Brand New
Paved Trails / Walking Track	Good

Overall Park Experience Scoring	
Design, Construction & Effectiveness	30
Comfort, Appearance, & Safety	25
Access and Linkages	18
Sociability and Sustainability	6
Environmental Sustainability	14
Economic Sustainability	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>

**Exceeds Expectations**

### Project Team Observations

- » Sports lighting is aging.
- » Multipurpose field allows for multiple practices and games to take place concurrently.
- » Perimeter landscaping is mature and provides a comforting experience, however, internal landscaping is lacking.
- » If desired, the space of this park allows for reprogramming to accommodate a range of recreational uses, not limited to indoor structures.

# 3. Jagers Park

Address: 424 S Spargo St, Dallas, NC 28034

This neighborhood park is well landscaped and offers a variety of park amenities. These include two outdoor basketball courts, a pavilion with picnic table seating, an approximately 1/5-mile paved walking track, playground equipment, and Gingles ballfield. The park is accessed by surface parking and features a single portable restroom.



Park Facility	Condition
Baseball / Softball Field	Fair
Basketball Courts (2)	Good
Paved Trails / Walking Track	Good
Bench (Outdoor)	Good
Picnic Shelter / Pavilion	Good
Playground	Fair

Overall Park Experience Scoring	
Design, Construction & Effectiveness	30
Comfort, Appearance, & Safety	24
Access and Linkages	13
Sociability and Sustainability	8
Environmental Sustainability	12
Economic Sustainability	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>

**Meets Expectations**

### Project Team Observations

- » Access to Gingles ballfield is limited.
- » Fencing, including the backstop and dugouts at Gingles ballfield is dated and in need of replacement.
- » Room for an additional amenity exists behind the back basketball court.

# 4. Carr Elementary School Fields

Address: 307 S Pine St, Dallas, NC 28034

Dallas residents have access to the various athletic facilities located at Carr Elementary School through a joint-use agreement with the Gaston County Board of Education. The Carr School Fields offer 4 baseball/softball fields and a multipurpose field primarily used for football practices. Parking and a permanent restroom facility is available at the W Carpenter Street entrance. Wooten and Cudd Fields offer room for 80'-90' base paths, which typically accommodate the 11-14-year-old age groups for youth baseball. All infields feature a crushed gravel surfacing, meant to improve drainage and allow for less maintenance. Each of the four ballfields have limited pedestrian interconnectivity between them, however, portable restrooms are available with relatively new concrete foundations to help with drainage.

At the time of this report, two new scoreboards have been donated to the site.



Park Facility	Condition
Baseball / Softball Fields	Good
Multi-Purpose Field	Good
Walking Path	Good
Concessions	Good

Overall Park Experience Scoring	
Design, Construction & Effectiveness	25
Comfort, Appearance, & Safety	19
Access and Linkages	12
Sociability and Sustainability	7
Environmental Sustainability	9
Economic Sustainability	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

Meets Expectations

### Project Team Observations

- » Baseball field surfacing provides quicker drainage and less maintenance demand.
- » Permanent restroom and concessions are distanced from back 2 ballfields.
- » Lighting at 2 ballfields is aging.

## Level of Service (LOS) Analysis

A Level of Service (LOS) Analysis evaluates a municipality's parks and recreation resources relative to its population, providing a measurable way to determine how well the system meets community needs. By benchmarking these results against national data, municipalities can assess their parks' efficacy and identify areas for improvement. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) defines Level of Service as:

"An allocation mechanism for the delivery of park land and basic recreation facilities throughout a community. By adoption of such a standard, a community in essence says that all citizens... will have an equal opportunity to share in the basic menu of services implicit in the standard and accompanying spatial distribution and allocation of policies."

While every community has unique recreation needs, three key metrics help compare and evaluate park systems using NRPA benchmarks:

- » Acreage (Total park land available)
- » Facilities (Number and variety of recreational amenities)
- » Access (Proximity and ease of reaching park facilities)

Each metric provides a different lens for assessing service levels. Acreage LOS measures the overall availability of park land, Facilities LOS gauges the number of amenities per resident, and Access LOS evaluates how easily residents can reach park facilities and beach access points in the Town's case. Together, these methods offer a comprehensive framework for understanding and improving a municipality's parks and recreation system.

### Level of Service



#### Acreage

Is there enough recreation space?



#### Facilities

Are there facilities and programs for everyone?



#### Access

How accessible are our parks by foot, bike, or vehicle?

## Acreage Level of Service

One metric to measure recreation Level of Service is through evaluation of total parkland acreage. The Town of Dallas operates approximately 25.99 acres of park land amongst its four recreation facilities. The Town's current population is 6,361, which translates into a total Acreage Level of Service of about 4.09 acres per 1,000 residents. This is below the benchmarked acreage provided by the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA), which recommends 12.9 acres per 1,000 resident for communities of a similar size to Dallas. This benchmarked acreage results in a total Town parkland acreage of 82.1 to meet national benchmarks, and would require the Town to acquire approximately 56 more acres of parkland to meet this benchmark.

Additionally, the Town has experienced significant growth in the last two decades, and that growth is not anticipated to slow in the future, as the projected population of the Town in the year 2035 is 8,272. Using this future population in computing park acreage level of service, Dallas in 2035 would require about 107 acres of total parkland to provide 12.9 acres per 1,000 residents.

<i>Acres of Park Land per Dallas Resident Population (acres / 1,000 residents)</i>				
<i>Year</i>	<i>NRPA Benchmark</i>	<i>NRPA (ac.)</i>	<i>Dallas (ac.)</i>	<i>+/-</i>
2023	"12.9 ac / 1,000 residents Population: 6,361"	82.1	25.99	"-8.8 acres / 1,000 residents -56.1 acres total"
2035	"12.9 ac / 1,000 residents Population: 8,272"	106.7	25.99	"-9.8 acres / 1,000 residents -80.7 acres total"

As discussed above, Dallas currently does not meet the national benchmarks for parkland acreage of communities of similar size. The Town is deficit approximately 8.8 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (56 acres total) in 2025, and will be deficit approximately 9.8 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (80.7 acres total) by 2035. Ongoing parkland acquisition and development will be discussed in the recommendations of this plan, but it must also be considered that not all recreation networks are fulfilling the same needs and goals. Dallas' location in the region provides various external and private opportunities to recreation all of which are largely accessible by a short drive.

For example, Dallas Park operates just west of US 321, and provides a variety of programming and facilities across a roughly 100-acre site. Gaston Aquatics is under development just north of the Carr Elementary School fields, and will provide brand new aquatic facilities and programming in the heart of Town. Ranking Lake Park, just south of Town along US 321 provides fishing and boating opportunities all within a 10-minute drive from the heart of downtown. Through plan development, it will be imperative to understand the balance of cost & efficiency of running a recreation department with a smaller direct footprint vs. expanding operations to fulfill the specific interests of Dallas stakeholders.

## Facility Level of Service

Facility Level of Service (Facility LOS) is the second approach used to evaluate the Town's parks system. It focuses on the number of park and recreation facilities available per resident. While there are no mandatory standards for the number of facilities a municipality must provide or that its community requires, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) offers recommendations as a guideline.

The following tables illustrate the Facility LOS for various park facilities and compares them to the NRPA's recommended benchmarks. The figures reflect both the current population and projections for 2035. Facilities with a deficit are highlighted in red.

<b>EXISTING</b>						
<b>Facility</b>	<b>National Averages (Jurisdictions &lt; 20,000)</b>	<b>% of Agencies</b>	<b>2024 Population (Est. 6,361)</b>			
			<b>NRPA</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Median Number of Res- idents/Facility (2025 Benchmarks)</b>	<b>+/-</b>
<i>Playgrounds or play structures</i>	1 / 2000	94%	3	3	2000	0
<i>Basketball courts, stand-alone</i>	1 / 4479	85%	1	1	4479	0
<i>Diamond Fields</i>	1 / 1958	80%	3	5	1958	2
<i>Rectangular fields</i>	1 / 2578	77%	2	2	2578	0
<i>Tennis courts</i>	1 / 3500	74%	2	0	3500	-2
<i>Dog parks</i>	1 / 10188	70%	1	0	10188	-1
<i>Community gardens</i>	1 / 8800	54%	1	0	8800	-1
<i>Swimming pools</i>	1 / 9745	49%	1	0	9745	-1
<i>Skateboard parks</i>	1 / 10776	47%	1	0	10776	-1
<i>Pickleball</i>	1 / 3483	45%	2	2	3483	0
<i>Volleyball courts, stand-alone</i>	1 / 7057	41%	1	1	7057	0
<i>Fitness zones/Exercise stations</i>	1 / 8274	39%	1	0	8274	-1

<b>EXISTING</b>						
<b>Facility</b>	<b>National Averages (Jurisdictions &lt; 20,000)</b>	<b>% of Agencies</b>	<b>2024 Population (Est. 6,361)</b>			
			<b>NRPA</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Median Number of Res- idents/Facility (2025 Benchmarks)</b>	<b>+/-</b>
<i>Multiuse courts – basket- ball, volleyball, etc.</i>	1 / 3900	38%	2	2	3900	0
<i>Splash pads, spray grounds or spray showers</i>	1 / 13391	38%	0	0	13391	0
<i>Multiuse racquet courts</i>	1 / 4659	38%	1	0	4659	-1
<i>Walking loops/Running tracks</i>	1 / 6129	36%	1	3	6129	2
<i>Disc golf courses</i>	1 / 9402	35%	1	0	9402	-1
<i>Driving range stations</i>	1 / 3548	31%	2	0	3548	-2
<i>18-hole golf courses</i>	1 / 11904	31%	1	0	11904	-1
<i>Synthetic rectangular fields</i>	1 / 11028	17%	1	0	11028	-1
<i>Ice rinks</i>	1 / 8338	17%	1	0	8338	-1
<i>Nine-hole golf courses</i>	1 / 17500	16%	0	0	17500	0
<i>Overlay fields</i>	1 / 7932	14%	1	0	7932	-1
<i>Waterparks</i>	1 / 17125	12%	0	0	17125	0
<i>Racquetball/Handball/ Squash courts</i>	1 / 14000	9%	0	0	14000	0
<i>Miles of Trail</i>	4.0 miles	n/a	4.0	0.6	4.0	-3.4

<b>EXISTING</b>						
<b>Community Facility</b>	<b>National Averages (Jurisdictions &lt; 20,000)</b>	<b>% of Agencies</b>	<b>2024 Population (Est. 6,361)</b>			
			<b>NRPA</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Median Number of Res- idents/Facility (2025 Benchmarks)</b>	<b>+/-</b>
<i>Recreation centers (including gyms)</i>	1 / 9875	63%	1	1	9,875	0
<i>Community centers</i>	1 / 10000	60%	1	1	10,000	0
<i>Permanent and semi-permanent restrooms</i>	1 / 2359	52%	3	6	2,359	3
<i>Performance amphitheaters</i>	1 / 10686	43%	1	0	10,686	-1
<i>Senior centers</i>	1 / 13966	41%	0	0	13,966	0
<i>Nature centers</i>	1 / 8832	35%	1	0	8,832	-1
<i>Aquatics centers</i>	1 / 13933	30%	0	0	13,933	0
<i>Facilities with restrooms available free of use to public</i>	1 / 5428	27%	1	4	5,428	3
<i>Stadiums</i>	1 / 9857	19%	1	0	9,857	-1
<i>Indoor ice rinks</i>	1 / 8054	12%	1	0	8,054	-1
<i>Teen centers</i>	1 / 15475	11%	0	0	15,475	0
<i>Arenas</i>	1 / 9402	9%	1	0	9,402	-1

The facility analysis reveals that Dallas has, and should continue to have, a surplus in baseball/softball facilities, walking tracks, and public bathrooms. Notable deficits in 2025 include: 2 tennis courts, a dog park, a community garden, a fitness station, a performance amphitheater, and about 3.4 miles of trail.

As the projected population of the Town grows in 2035, many additional deficits emerge including a playground, a basketball court, a rectangular field, and a splash pad. Some specialty facilities, such as a nature center, senior center, golf facilities, and a synthetic field should be considered, as they are present in facilities of similar size to Dallas. Facility LOS plays a critical role in plan development by serving as a starting piece of data that can be shared with Town residents and stakeholders to guide discussions regarding plan goals and realistic community needs.

<b>PROJECTED</b>						
<b>Facility</b>	<b>National Averages (Jurisdictions &lt; 20,000)</b>	<b>% of Agencies</b>	<b>2035 Population (Est. 8,872)</b>			
			<b>NRPA</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Median Number of Res- idents/Facility (2025 Benchmarks)</b>	<b>+/-</b>
<i>Playgrounds or play structures</i>	1 / 2000	94%	4	3	2000	-1
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<i>Miles of Trail</i>	4.0 miles	n/a	4.0	0.6	4.0	-3.4

<b>PROJECTED</b>						
<b>Community Facility</b>	<b>National Averages (Jurisdictions &lt; 20,000)</b>	<b>% of Agencies</b>	<b>2035 Population (Est. 8,872)</b>			
			<b>NRPA</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Median Number of Res- idents/Facility (2025 Benchmarks)</b>	<b>+/-</b>
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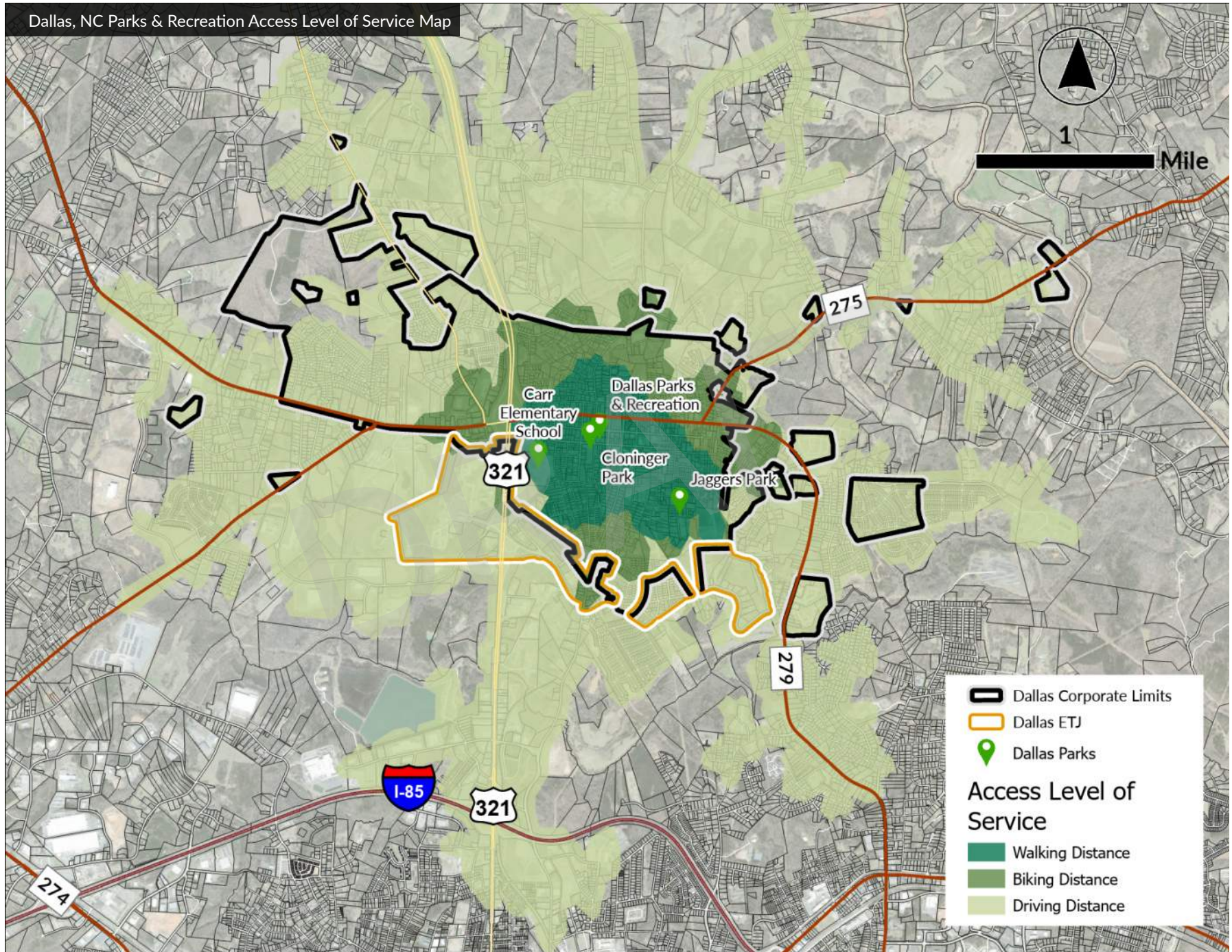
## Access Level of Service

Access Level of Service (Access LOS) is the third method used to assess how well a park system meets the needs of its community. Access LOS evaluates how easily residents can reach park facilities, typically measured by distance (either in miles or travel time), indicating the effort required to access a park. For the purposes of this evaluation, a distance of 1/2 mile is considered a comfortable walking distance, 1 mile represents a long walk or short bike ride, and 3 miles corresponds to a long bike ride or short drive. Access LOS is provided for Town-owned parks and the Carr Elementary Schools fields, as they are operated and maintained by the Town through a joint-use agreement with the County Board of Education.

Access LOS analysis reveals that almost all of the Town's residents are within a short car ride of a park facility. Furthermore, many of the residences near the Town's core and surrounding neighborhoods are within a short bike ride or walk to park facilities. Dallas' park facilities are optimally located to efficiently and equitably serve the community. Future park facilities may be considered near the Town's eastern limits to serve some of the additional residential development that is occurring there. Strategic consideration of US 321 and NC 275 will be required in the future to efficiently located future park facilities and ensure accessibility to all of Dallas' parks.



Park bench near at near Dallas Historic Courthouse. Credit: WithersRavenel



## Programming & Operational Analysis

The Dallas Parks and Recreation Department provides a limited range of programming to the community. Dallas' population (approximately 6,710 in 2024) is served by both the local recreation department as well as Gaston County, Gastonia, and private providers.

The programs, activities and special events take place at various locations throughout the Town primarily at the Carr School Fields and Dennis Franklin Gym. Almost all programs have fees associated with them with fees fluctuating by program and instructor/program intensity as well as the market. The registration process can be completed in person or on-line with the Town utilizing RecDesk to process recreation classes.

### Recreation Program Participation

The charts below summarizes participation in recreation activities over the past 2 years.

Program	2024-2025	2025-2026*
Adult Softball		60
Baseball	137	130
Basketball	305	308
Cheerleading	65	147
Coach Pitch	73	93
Flag Football	48	
Pickleball		50
Soccer	211	248
Softball	122	218
Tackle Football		87
Tee Ball	132	128
Volleyball	50	63
Yoga		60

Category	2024-2025	2025-2026*
Programs Offered	39	42
Total Participants	1,143	1,592

\*Through spring 2026.

The Town implemented the use of its recreation management software in 2024, so there is no information available for prior years.

As noted, the figures are incomplete for the year 2025-2026 and it is anticipated the programs and participation will increase.

Staff has increased the number of programs as well as the splitting programs into various age groups as participation has increased. While additional sections of programs may be added at times, lack of volunteers, staff and program spaces will impact the ability for programs to continue to grow in the number offered as well as participation. Basketball and cheer are capped for registration as the current facility will only allow limited number of teams. Currently, there are a very small percentage of programs that are canceled due to low enrollment. This demonstrates the staff attempting to offer opportunities for participation in programs that are of interest to residents.



Dallas Tee Ball. Credit: Town of Dallas

### General Program Categories

The following is a listing of general program categories where programs are often offered by a full-service parks and recreation agencies. It is unusual for an agency to directly offer programs in all of these areas, but there are usually either agreements with other providers for some of these activities or a referral to them.

<b>Area</b>	<b>General Description</b>
<b>Aquatics</b>	<i>Learn to swim classes, aqua exercise classes, competitive swimming/diving SCUBA, and other programs (artistic swimming, water polo, etc.).</i>
<b>Cultural Arts</b>	<i>Performing arts classes, visual arts classes, music/video production and arts events.</i>
<b>Education</b>	<i>Language programs, tutoring, science (STEAM) classes, computer, and financial planning.</i>
<b>Fitness/Wellness</b>	<i>Group fitness classes, personal training, education, and nutrition.</i>
<b>General Interest</b>	<i>Personal development classes.</i>
<b>Outdoor Recreation</b>	<i>Environmental education, hiking, camping, kayaking, and other activities.</i>
<b>Self-Directed</b>	<i>This includes opportunities for individuals to recreate on their own.</i>
<b>Seniors/Older Adults</b>	<i>Programs and services that are dedicated to serving the needs of seniors. This can include all of the activity areas noted above plus social service functions.</i>
<b>Social Services</b>	<i>This can include nutrition and feeding programs, job training, life skills training, and other activities such as health screenings.</i>
<b>Special Events</b>	<i>Town wide special events that are conducted throughout the year.</i>
<b>Special Needs</b>	<i>Programs for the physically and mentally impaired. Also, inclusion programs.</i>
<b>Sports</b>	<i>Youth and adult team and individual sports. Also includes adventure/non-traditional sports.</i>
<b>Teens</b>	<i>Programs and services that are focused on serving the needs of teens. This can include all of the activity areas noted above (except seniors).</i>
<b>Youth</b>	<i>Before and after school programs, summer/school break camps, and preschool.</i>

The Town of Dallas offers programming in the following categories:

### ***Self-Directed***

The parks provide ample opportunity for both active and passive recreation. While not fee based or staff led, the Town parks provide among other activities, picnic shelters for enjoying a meal and shade, open space to view nature, and trails for walking/running.

### ***Fitness***

Gentle Flow Yoga has been introduced as a program and has been well-received.

### ***Special Events***

The Town offers a few special events that are planned, marketed and managed by Town staff. Parks staff assist in the set up and take down. While some of the activities have registration, many are free to attend. In addition, the Town hosts special events provided by others, which requires a Special Events Application. These events are required to pay fees and handle all set up and clean up.

Events hosted by the Town include:

- » Concert series
- » 4th of July
- » Halloween
- » Christmas Parade
- » Carols on the Square
- » Movies in the Park (launching summer 2026)

### ***Sports***

Dallas provides a number of team sports primarily for youth. The sports program provided by the Town are ones typically offered by parks and recreation departments, adult softball, pickleball, youth cheerleading, youth volleyball, youth soccer, youth baseball, youth softball, youth basketball, youth flag football and youth tackle football.

## Town Recreation Program Determinants

### Age Segmentation

Recreation programs should cater to the needs of different age groups, often categorized by pre-school, youth, teens, adults, and seniors. While many programs are designed for a primary age group, they may also serve additional audiences. For example, a softball league open to participants aged 14 and older may primarily attract adults, but teens and seniors may also take part.

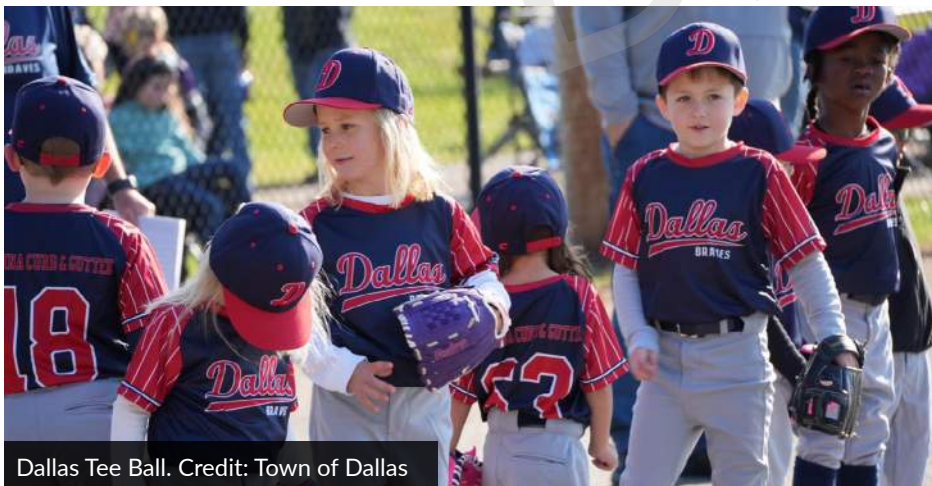
Based on Dallas' current programs, the offerings serve mostly preschoolers and youth. With 23.4% of the community's population between the ages of 0 and 18, there is a need to provide substantial programs for this age group. Preschool programs typically require indoor space but could also include outdoor nature play programs, guided parent/tot playgroups with music, or sports samplers.

Teenagers make up a critical user group for parks and recreation departments, and tend to be one of the toughest to engage. Communities can create opportunities for teens to engage and recreate in the community by developing facilities for sports or active recreation, like a skate park or pump track. Teen-focused programs could include outdoor adventure classes, environmental education/stewardship, leadership development, or entrepreneurship programs.

Adults represent nearly a third of the population, with the largest cohort being between the ages of 25 and 44 years old. Dallas offers fewer adult programs, though many residents of this age are engaged in Dallas Parks & Recreation through their kids' involvement in youth activities. Many adults favor fitness-based recreation, accommodated through programs like group fitness or personal training.

Many departments have a large number of programs specifically for seniors, which usually take place indoors.

**The current mix of programs lacks many opportunities for adults and seniors.**



Dallas Tee Ball. Credit: Town of Dallas



Dallas Youth Soccer. Credit: Town of Dallas Parks and Recreation

### Classes Offered by Season

Enrollment in programs has increased as staff has identified the activities that are most successful and continue to lean into them. While programs are offered throughout the year, the busiest time is during the fall and winter months.

<b>Season</b>	<b>% Classes</b>	<b>% Participants</b>
<i>Fall (Aug - Oct)</i>	48.8%	48.1%
<i>Winter (Nov. - Feb.)</i>	26.8%	33.8%
<i>Spring (Mar. - June)</i>	22.0%	16.4%
<i>Summer (July - Aug.)</i>	2.4%	1.6%

### Program Delivery

The Department currently uses multiple models to deliver programs to the community. The primary models can be described as follows:

#### Staff Run

These programs are offered by the Department and are run by staff, both full-time and part-time, and can take place on a seasonal or annual basis.

- » Benefit. The Department has maximum control over the program, its content, and the instructors. They can also maximize revenue generation.
- » Challenges. The Department is responsible for managing and maintaining the staff.
- » Examples: Youth and adult sports

#### Third Party

These programs may or may not appear in the Department's program brochure but are run by a third-party contractor. These instructors are paid on a contract basis and there is typically a revenue split between the contractor and the Department.

- » Benefit. Using contract instructors/programmers allows the Department to pivot as trends shift. It also means that the Department does not have to hire additional part-time staff.
- » Challenges. The biggest challenge is managing the contract as to how the program is run will be a reflection on the Department.
- » Examples: Yoga and pickleball

**Co-Sponsor**

These programs may or may not appear in the Department’s program brochure and are run by an outside group that is utilizing facility space from the Department or others.

- » Benefit. The Department is only utilizing the space, there is minimal staff time required, and it is transactional in nature.
- » Challenges. The programs taking place can be associated with the Department which can cause challenges if not done properly.
- » Examples: No current co-sponsored programming in Dallas.

It is important to note that the program delivery model does not impact whether a program is a core service.

**Core Programming**

Core Programs are those the Parks and Recreation Department has primary responsibility for providing programs for the community. Secondary Programs are those that may or may not be provided by the Town. While some of these activities may be a higher priority of residents, the lack of facilities does not allow them to be higher. These may be offered by other organizations. Support Programs are programs that are not a priority for the Department to be providing directly to the community. The Town may provide information and/or promote the activities, but they are administered by other organizations. Based on the recreation programs offered by the Town above, the following are general categories of programs by degree of emphasis.

<b>Core Programs</b>	<b>Secondary Programs</b>	<b>Support Programs</b>
<i>Self-Directed</i>	<i>Seniors/Older Adults</i>	<i>Aquatics</i>
<i>Special Events</i>	<i>Teens</i>	<i>Cultural Arts</i>
<i>Sports</i>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Education</i>
		<i>Fitness/Wellness</i>
		<i>General Interest</i>
		<i>Outdoor Recreation</i>
		<i>Special Needs</i>

This determination is also based on the staffing dedicated to supporting the programs. There are 2 Full-time recreation positions. The limited staffing impacts the number and type of programs the Town is able to provide for the community.

### Programs Offered by Other Organizations

Beyond the Town, there are a few number of other organizations that provide recreation opportunities in the area surrounding Dallas. These include:

#### Public Providers

<b>Gastonia Parks &amp; Recreation</b>
12 Parks
4.6 miles of Greenway Trails
4 Community Centers
2 Outdoor Pools
1 Adult Recreation Center
1 Skeet and Trap Range
Programs, activities and events in Aquatics, Fitness/Wellness, Seniors, Special Events, Sports, and Youth
<b>Bessemer City Parks and Recreation</b>
5 Parks
1 Community Center
1 Outdoor Pool
1 Adult Recreation Center
Programs, activities and events in Aquatics, Fitness/Wellness, Seniors, Special Events, Sports, and Youth

<b>Gaston County</b>
9 Parks
1 Adult Recreation Center
Special Events
<b>North Carolina State Parks</b>
Crowders Mountain State Park



Poston Park Pump Track in Gastonia. Credit: WithersRavenel

**Private Providers**

<b>Recreation Service Providers</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Facility/Activity</b>
Goins Strong Fitness	Dallas	Fitness
Workout Anytime Dallas	Dallas	Fitness
Ormaza Martial Arts	Dallas	Martial Arts
Bodyquest Health & Fitness Center	Gastonia	Fitness
Planet Fitness	Gastonia	Fitness
Spindle City CrossFit	Gastonia	Fitness
704 Sports Academy	Gastonia	Fitness
Dragonfly Martial Arts	Gastonia	Martial Arts
Gaston JiuJitsu Academy	Gastonia	Martial Arts
Fever Dance and Tumble	Gastonia	Dance
Gaston Dance Theatre	Gastonia	Dance

This is only a partial list of providers. Most of these organizations have their own facilities and are not dependent on Town facilities for their programs.



Credit: Town of Dallas

ESRI utilizes socioeconomic and demographic information to segment populations to provide information about consumers and their behaviors in order to provide insight into potential products and services. The Market Potential Index (MPI) indicates that the overall propensity for adults (18 & older) to participate in activities is greater than the national number of 100 in a number of activities. The following shows the participation rates for a few indoor and outdoor activities. While there is not necessarily a direct correlation between adult and youth participation, it is worth noting those activities that are greater than 100. There is strong interest in sports both indoor court (basketball and volleyball) and outdoor field (football and softball). As such the programs offered should align with these segments.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Expected Number of Adults</b>	<b>Percent of Population</b>	<b>MPI</b>
Aerobics	341	6.9%	92
Baseball	145	2.9%	98
Basketball	292	5.9%	103
Bicycling (Mountain)	134	2.7%	85
Fishing (Fresh Water)	492	9.9%	104
Fishing (Salt Water)	155	3.1%	93
Football	142	2.9%	104
Golf	358	7.2%	90
Hiking	759	15.3%	83
Jogging or Running	452	9.1%	89
Martial Arts	61	1.2%	94
Pickleball	139	2.8%	78
Soccer	180	3.6%	97
Softball	92	1.9%	103
Swimming	806	16.3%	100
Tennis	154	3.1%	87
Volleyball	147	3.0%	112
Walking for Exercise	1,525	30.8%	95
Yoga	456	9.2%	96

### Program Gap Analysis & Opportunities

The following table summarizes which program areas which are provided by either the Town and/or Other Organizations. Shading indicates that program area is provided.

<b>Program Areas</b>	<b>Dallas</b>	<b>Other Organizations</b>	<b>No Provider</b>
<b>Aquatics*</b>			
<b>Cultural Arts</b>			
<b>Education</b>			
<b>Fitness/Wellness</b>			
<b>General Interest</b>			
<b>Outdoor Recreation</b>			
<b>Self-Directed</b>			
<b>Seniors/Older Adults</b>			
<b>Social Services</b>			
<b>Special Events</b>			
<b>Special Needs</b>			
<b>Sports</b>			
<b>Teens</b>			
<b>Youth</b>			

\* Gaston Aquatic Center scheduled to open in summer 2026. The facility has no affiliation with the Town of Dallas.

When the recreation services that the Town and the other organizations are providing are analyzed, Aquatics, General Interest, Outdoor Recreation, Seniors, and Special Needs are not currently covered. For the program areas that the Town or organizations are not providing, the community has to be reliant on other agencies or private providers in the area for these services. While a portion of the program areas are being covered, overall, there are limited recreation programs being offered by the Town. With limited staffing and program space, the focus area of programs is Special Events and Sports. The vast majority of programs are provided by staff or contracted staff. The lack of indoor space and parks limits the expansion of program opportunities in certain areas.

## **Recreational Facilities**

In order to provide a comprehensive recreation program, adequate indoor facilities are critical. The Town of Dallas has a single indoor facility for recreation programming. This limits the quantity and diversity of programs to those that can take place in a gymnasium or provided outdoor at a park.

### **Dennis Franklin Gymnasium**

- » Parking - Limited
- » Single court with bleachers
  - Accommodates basketball, volleyball, and pickleball
  - Don't have floor covering to allow for larger variety of programs or events
- » Restrooms
- » Facility is scheduled to capacity Jan. – Mar.
  - Prime Time Hours Per Week
    - Mon – Thu 5:30 – 9:00PM
    - Sat 8:00AM – 7:00PM
    - 22 of 24 hours used (does not include set up/take down)

### **Carr School Fields**

- » Adjacent to Carr Elementary School
- » 4 diamonds with skinned infields and natural grass
  - 1 field with 275 ft. fence, 2 fields with 200 ft. fence, 1 field with 175 ft. fence
  - One field has short left field due to overlap
- » Covered dugouts
- » Sports lighting
- » Bleachers for spectators (no shade covering)
- » There is not an ADA accessible route to the fields
- » Rectangle field beyond outfield
- » Parking (limited)

**Parks and Recreation Staff**

### Organization Chart



The Department is constrained to expand programs due to limited staffing and facilities. The current department staffing has 2 full-time positions. Staff has responsibility for coordinating programs, activities and events as well as maintaining the parks and setting up the athletic fields for play.

The typical park and recreation department has 8.6 full-time employees per 10,000 residents. For Dallas, this would equate to 5.6 positions. The typical park and recreation department generally allocates staffing into four types of positions. This is compared to the Town of Dallas and communities of similar size, reporting to NRPA.

<b><i>Parks and Recreation Responsibilities</i></b>	<b><i>NRPA All</i></b>	<b><i>Population Under 20,000</i></b>
<b><i>Parks Operations &amp; Maintenance</i></b>	<b><i>46%</i></b>	<b><i>4.0</i></b>
<b><i>Recreation</i></b>	<b><i>30%</i></b>	<b><i>2.7</i></b>
<b><i>Administration</i></b>	<b><i>17%</i></b>	<b><i>1.4</i></b>
<b><i>Capital/Other</i></b>	<b><i>7%</i></b>	<b><i>0.6</i></b>

Critical to having strong management and operations of recreation programs, services, and facilities; is having a strong staffing and operations plan in place. It must be recognized that staffing levels in Parks and Recreation are at a minimum level and if programs and activities are going to be improved and added, and maintenance standards increased, then additional staffing will be required. With lower staffing levels it is difficult to find adequate time for long range planning, operations tracking, cost recovery monitoring and policies and procedures development.

### ***Recreation Programming Summary Points:***

- » The department is small and responsible for all aspects of the operation.
- » Staff has a strong commitment to improving programs and increasing participation.
- » This is a low level of staffing for current operations of programs and facilities as staff is primarily focused on day-to-day operations of facilities lacking time to plan new programs and events.
- » With limited staffing and program space, the focus area of programs is Self-Directed, Special Events and Sports.
- » In order to expand programming, additional space and staff will be required.
- » The Town uses best practices for volunteer coaches in the sports programs with background checks.
- » The Town utilizes RecDesk for on-line registration for programs and reservations.
- » The department should develop a programming philosophy for delivering programs and services in the future. This will allow for the identification of program areas and how they will be delivered (staff, contract or others).
- » The department needs to develop a program plan. The plan will provide procedures for administering programs from program

proposal to performance measures. The plan will ensure the needs of the community are being met in all program areas. There is not a formal facility use policy for prioritization of programs vs. rentals.

- » Fees are primarily set based on direct cost of programs, previous year and comparison to other communities.
- » While the department establishes fees annually, a formal fee policy should be implemented to guide fee setting for programs, facility use and rentals.
- » Performance measures should be identified annually for facility use, special events and programs.
- » A marketing strategy or plan for parks and recreation should be in place to guide marketing efforts.
- » Staff monitors community feedback, but there are no formal evaluation procedures for programs. Many departments distribute program evaluation surveys or host focus groups to garner additional user insight.

### **Funding Sources and Budgets**

The Town of Dallas General Fund provides funds for operations and maintenance. The annual budget for the Parks and Recreation Department varies from year to year with the greatest variable being capital construction projects, depending on project needs and grants received. The department generates funding through sources such as recreation program fees, park and facility reservations. However, these funds are minimal compared to the staff time needed to administer and manage the rentals and programs and lumped in with the General Fund.

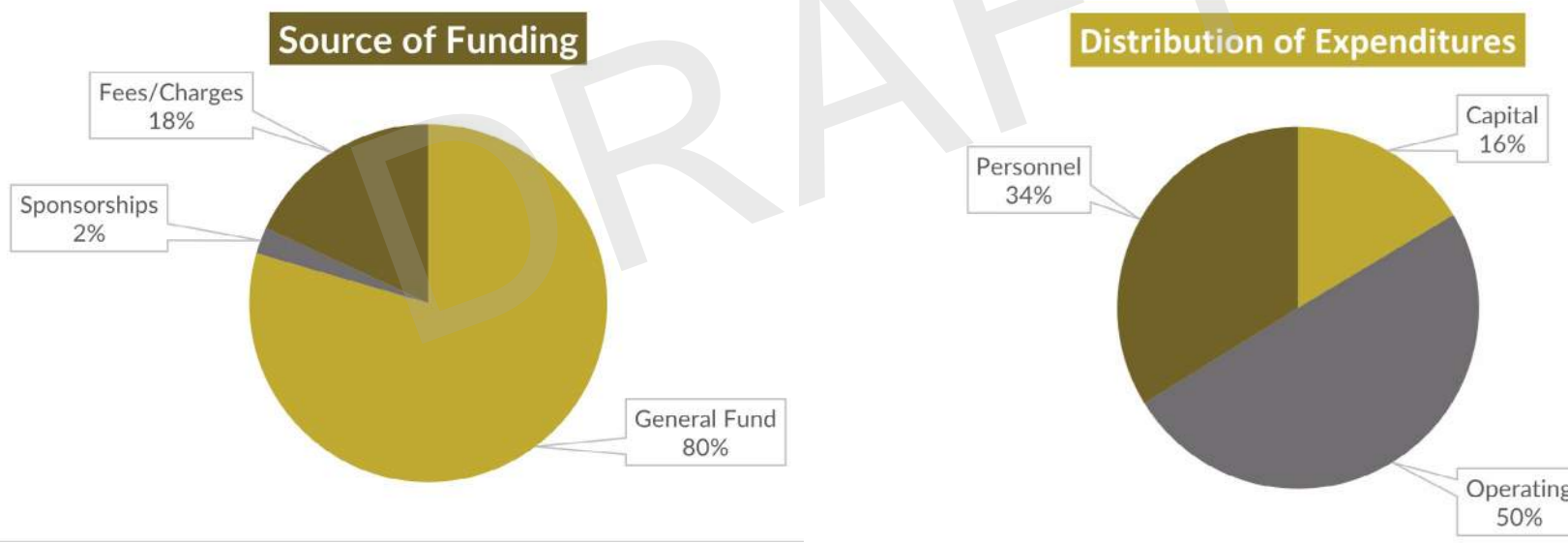
Several funding strategies and options can be identified through the review and analysis that work within and alongside community values. These strategies range from changes in fees and charges, updated partnership agreements, exploration of additional grants and sponsorships and identification of new potential earned income sources.

### **Annual Budget Trends**

The annual budget over the past three years has seen an overall upward trend, with the total budget increasing by 87.9% over this period. While this is a substantial increase in expenditures, revenue generated from fees/charges and sponsorships has increased at a greater rate (167.8%) and more than made up the difference. Cost recovery increased from 18.8% to 30.8% when excluding the capital investment.

	FY23	FY24	FY25
Revenue	\$63,446.00	\$73,683.38	\$163,832.96
Revenue	\$63,446.00	\$73,683.38	\$163,832.96
Expenditures	\$338,239.61	\$542,787.25	\$635,631.95
Personnel	\$162,885.02	\$162,315.61	\$215,019.88
Operating	\$175,354.27	\$226,212.64	\$316,177.70
Capital	\$0.32	\$154,259.00	\$104,434.37

General Fund Tax support and dedicated levies typically account for 79.5% of the funding for Parks and Recreation Departments. The national average for earned revenue from departments through fees and charges accounts for 20%, with the remainder as special taxes/levies, grants, sponsorships, donations, and other.



- » Salaries (Personnel) account for 33.8% of the expenditures by Parks and Recreation, which is lower than the national average of 55.0%.
- » Operating expense add up to 49.7% with the remaining 16.4% for Capital.
- » Nationally, approximately 5% is spent on capital expenditures annually.

## National Participation and Trends

Public parks and recreation agencies have been tested in the last 10 to 20 years to alter their approach to providing parks and recreation services. This has been based on the following:

**Increasing Demands** – Ever increasing facility, program, and service demands from the public.

**Inclusiveness** – The requirement that agencies provide access to facilities, programs, and services to an ever more diverse population. This includes meeting the needs of different ethnic groups, economic status, age, and ability.

**Cost Effectiveness** - A demand that parks and recreation agencies be more cost effective in their development and operations of services and facilities.

**Measurable Outcomes** – A strong need to be able to quantify the results and benefits of the programs and facilities that are provided. Establishing well-defined levels of service (LOS) is critical.

As a result of these factors, the following general parks and recreation best practices have been adopted.

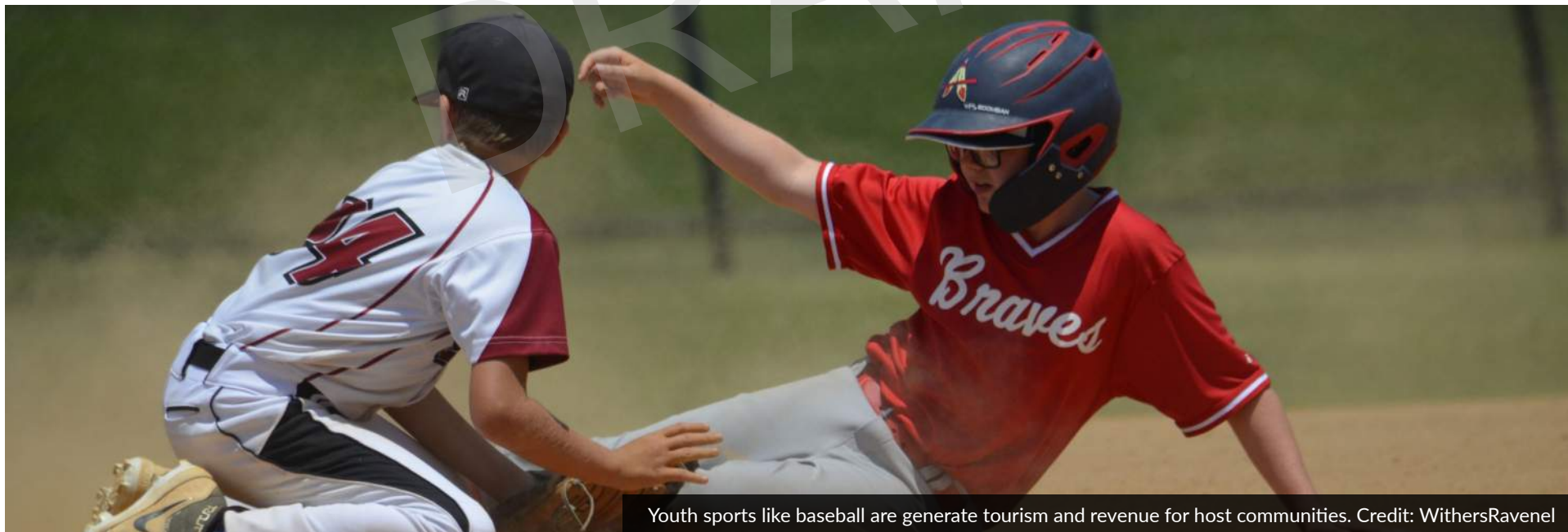
- » Parks and recreation agencies have a clear vision statement regarding their roles and responsibilities in providing services to their constituents.
- » The vision statement is backed up by several pointed goals. These goals are updated on an annual basis.
- » Utilizing the vision and goals, a professional and updated master plan is in place to guide future development and operations of parks and recreation facilities and programs.
- » There are on-going, long range, planning efforts to position the agency for success in the future.
- » There is a realization that an agency cannot effectively be all things to all people in the delivery of parks and recreation services and facilities. As a result, specific areas of focus are determined, and certain functions are left to other organizations and entities.
- » Careful analysis is being done to determine which services should be provided in-house and which should be contracted to other providers.
- » There is strong record keeping that allows for trends and directional analysis. This also results in the development of specific performance measures. For this to be effective there must be full computerization of all management records. This includes program registration, point of sale, rentals, facility scheduling, timecard management, maintenance, etc.
- » There are well written and comprehensive policies and procedures in place that cover all aspects of an agency's management and operation. These are updated on a regular basis.
- » Virtually every aspect of an agency's operation is evaluated, tracked, and measured on a regular basis.

## Youth Sports Trends

Nationally, youth sports participation has rebounded to pre-Covid-19 levels but in a more concentrated, commercialized form. Participants are seeking opportunities with “select” sports clubs instead of “recreational” organizations such as municipal parks and recreation departments. In addition, children now play an average of just 1.63 sports, down 13% since 2019, signaling a trend toward earlier specialization. Park and recreation agencies—reaching more than 40 million youth annually—must counter these pressures by prioritizing low-cost, multisport, developmentally appropriate programs rather than elite, single-sport tracks

Equity and access are central concerns across the country and within North Carolina. There continues to be persistent gaps in participation for girls, children with disabilities, and youth from lower-income households.

Finally, youth sports are a growing economic engine and tourism driver that North Carolina communities are beginning to leverage. Sports ETA’s most recent State of the Industry work shows sports-related travel generated \$52.2 billion in direct spending in 2023, with more than 200 million travelers and 73 million room nights. 63% of U.S. destinations now cite sports as their largest generator of hotel room nights. Within that, youth tournaments are emerging as a key growth segment that can create repeat visitation over decades. It is imperative for park and recreation agencies to link new facilities and events to sports-tourism strategies while positioning youth sports infrastructure as “community-first, tournament-capable”—designed to serve local kids daily while also attracting well-managed events that bring visitors, support local businesses, and generate revenue to reinvest back into inclusive, affordable youth sports programs.



Youth sports like baseball are generate tourism and revenue for host communities. Credit: WithersRavenel

Below are shown current recreation program trends by major program areas as developed by Ballard\*King & Associates. However, it should be noted that each community is unique, and this has a strong bearing on individual trends and other operational factors.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Specific Programs</b>
<b>Sports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Youth Lacrosse</li> <li>» Adult Soccer</li> <li>» Adult Cricket</li> <li>» Youth Camps and Clinics</li> <li>» Adventure/Non-Traditional (BMX, Mountain Biking, Disc Golf, Ultimate Frisbee)</li> <li>» Individual Sports (Fencing)</li> <li>» E-Sports Competitions and Tournaments</li> <li>» Youth Sports Specific Training</li> <li>» Pickleball</li> <li>» Youth &amp; Adult Rugby</li> </ul>
<b>Fitness/Wellness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Functional Training Classes</li> <li>» Personal/Small Group Training</li> <li>» Yoga</li> <li>» Nutrition/Cooking</li> <li>» Healthy Lifestyle Education</li> <li>» Mindfulness Programs</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Arts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Music Production for Youth</li> <li>» Digital Media</li> </ul>
<b>Youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Before and After School Programs at Recreation Centers, Specialty Summer Camps</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Camps (including for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math, or STEAM)</li> </ul>
<b>Outdoor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Eco-Tourism</li> <li>» Environmental Education</li> </ul>
<b>Seniors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Fitness/Wellness</li> <li>» Sports (pickleball)</li> <li>» Baby Boomer-Focused Activities</li> </ul>
<b>Aquatics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Therapy</li> <li>» Triathlon Training</li> </ul>
<b>General Interest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Personal Finance</li> <li>» Cooking</li> </ul>
<b>Special Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Community Wide Events</li> <li>» Health and Wellness</li> </ul>
<b>Social Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Feeding Programs, Job Training, Educational Support, Childcare</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Virtual Programming</li> </ul>

## **Recreation Program Trends**

- » Departments are continuing to partner with agencies for access to facilities and staffing.
- » Access to school facilities is being reduced due to concerns over safety and security.
- » There is a greater emphasis on cost recovery, especially for more specialized programming. This is supported by a formal fee policy.
- » Programming continues to emphasize the needs of youth and seniors but has also focused more on adults, and the family unit.
- » Specific programming development trends include.
  - Developing programs that are single day or no more than 4 sessions in length.
  - Developing programs for youth during non-school days, Christmas break, spring break and any other extended breaks.
  - Offering a variety of summer camps with different areas of interest.
  - More Saturday programs and the introduction of some Sunday programming (especially in adult sports leagues).
  - Senior programming that occurs in the evening or on the weekends to appeal to seniors who are still in the work force.
  - Introducing programs that are oriented toward specific ethnic groups.
  - Developing a baseline of programs that appeal to the family unit.
  - Staggering the days and times of similar programs that are offered at multiple locations.
- » There has been a concerted effort to integrate conventional recreation programming with community based social service programs and education. Most of the social service programs are offered by other community-based agencies and education is often coordinated with school districts.
- » Program characteristics (performance measures) are tracked including:
  - Program registration comparisons by year for each season.
  - Rates of fill (especially for fee-based programming).
  - Participation numbers and comparisons to past years/seasons.
  - Rate of program cancellations (for fee-based programming).
  - Financial performance including cost per participant.
  - Evaluations from participants.
- » A lifecycle analysis is completed for all programs offered by the agency. Programs are classified in three categories and agencies strive to have program offerings distributed equally among each category.
  - New – programs in the start-up phase that are just starting to build in popularity.
  - Mature – programs that have consistent high levels of registrations and are still growing in popularity.
  - Old – programs that are seeing a decline in popularity

**National Summary of Sports Participation:** The following chart summarizes participation for activities utilizing information from the 2024 National Sporting Goods Association survey, which includes ages 7 and above

<b>Activities</b>	<b>National Rank</b>	<b>National Participation (in millions)</b>
<i>Exercise Walking</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>105.1</b>
<i>Hiking</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>54.9</b>
<i>Exercising w/ Equipment</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>50.7</b>
<i>Swimming</i>	<b>4</b>	<b>46.9</b>
<i>Bicycle Riding</i>	<b>5</b>	<b>40.6</b>
<i>Running/Jogging</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>40.4</b>
<i>Camping (Vacation/Overnight)</i>	<b>7</b>	<b>39.2</b>
<i>Weight Lifting</i>	<b>8</b>	<b>37.6</b>
<i>Workout @ Club</i>	<b>9</b>	<b>30.7</b>
<i>Fishing (Fresh Water)</i>	<b>10</b>	<b>30.7</b>
<i>Yoga</i>	<b>12</b>	<b>28.6</b>
<i>Basketball</i>	<b>13</b>	<b>23.9</b>
<i>Soccer</i>	<b>18</b>	<b>15.8</b>
<i>Pickleball</i>	<b>19</b>	<b>15.4</b>
<i>Tennis</i>	<b>20</b>	<b>15.0</b>
<i>Volleyball</i>	<b>26</b>	<b>10.8</b>
<i>Baseball</i>	<b>27</b>	<b>10.7</b>
<i>Softball</i>	<b>31</b>	<b>7.9</b>
<i>Football (flag)</i>	<b>37</b>	<b>6.7</b>
<i>Mountain Biking (off road)</i>	<b>38</b>	<b>6.7</b>
<i>Football (tackle)</i>	<b>39</b>	<b>6.6</b>
<i>Cheerleading</i>	<b>50</b>	<b>3.7</b>

National Rank: Popularity of sport based on national survey.

National Participation: Population that participate in this sport on national survey.

**National Participation by Age Group:** Within the NSGA survey, participation is broken down by age groups. As such the Project Team has identified the top 3 age groups participating in the activities reflected in this report.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Largest</b>	<b>Second Largest</b>	<b>Third Largest</b>
Aerobics	35-44	25-34	45-54
Baseball	7-11	12-17	35-44
Basketball	12-17	25-34	18-24
Bicycle Riding (Mountain)	25-34	35-44	45-54
Bicycle Riding (Road)	55-64	45-54	12-17
Camping	25-34	35-44	55-64
Cheerleading	12-17	7-11	18-24
Exercise Walking	55-64	65-74	45-54
Exercise w/ Equipment	25-34	45-54	55-64
Fishing (fresh)	55-64	45-54	25-34
Football (flag)	7-11	12-17	25-34
Football (tackle)	12-17	25-34	35-44
Hiking	25-34	55-64	45-54
Pickleball	12-17	65-74	18-24
Running/Jogging	25-34	35-44	45-54
Soccer	7-11	12-17	25-34
Softball	7-11	12-17	35-44
Swimming	55-64	12-17	7-11
Tennis	35-44	25-34	12-17
Volleyball	12-17	25-34	18-24
Weight Lifting	25-34	45-54	35-44
Workout at Clubs	25-34	35-44	45-54
Yoga	25-34	35-44	45-54

**National Sports Participation Trends:** Below are listed several sports activities and the percentage of growth or decline that each has experienced nationally over the last ten years (2015-2024).

<b>Increase in Participation</b>	<b>2015 Participation</b>	<b>2024 Participation</b>	<b>Percent Increase</b>
Pickleball	1.7	15.4	805.9%
Hiking	42.0	54.9	30.7%
Mountain Biking (off road)	5.6	6.7	19.6%
Tennis	12.8	15.0	17.2%
Soccer	14.1	15.8	12.1%
Weight Lifting	34.8	37.6	8.0%
Cheerleading	3.7	3.9	5.4%
Fishing (fresh water)	29.5	30.7	4.1%
Football (flag)	6.6	6.7	1.5%
Swimming	46.3	46.9	1.3%
Volleyball	10.7	10.8	0.9%
<b>Decrease in Participation</b>	<b>2015 Participation</b>	<b>2024 Participation</b>	<b>Percent Decrease</b>
Exercise Walking	106.3	105.1	-1.1%
Camping (Vacation/Overnight)	40.1	39.2	-2.2%
Basketball	24.8	23.9	-3.6%
Yoga	30.7	28.6	-6.8%
Running/Jogging	44.5	40.4	-9.2%
Exercising w/ Equipment	56.3	50.7	-9.9%
Baseball	11.8	10.6	-10.2%
Football (tackle)	7.8	6.6	-15.4%
Workout @ Club	36.6	30.7	-16.1%
Softball	9.8	7.9	-19.4%

## Outdoor Participation and Park Trends

In 2024, the outdoor recreation participant base grew 3% to a record 181.1 million participants, or 58.6% of all Americans aged 6 and older. There were significant increases in the number of youth and seniors, participants with more than \$100K in annual income, participants in the South, participants with a high school diploma and no college education, and Black and Hispanic participants. Additionally, the number of “core”—or most frequent—participants increased by 5.7% (five million participants). Participants are most attracted to walking, hiking, fishing, camping, bicycling, and running outdoors and each of those major activities gained an average of 2.1 million participants. Nearly every signal in the 2024 participation data is positive for prolonged growth. Despite weakening economic conditions, the prospect of growth in the number of Americans who participate in outdoor recreation is very strong.

### Demographic Trends

- » Growth:
  - Youth (aged 6–12): +5.6%
  - Seniors (aged 65+): +7.4%
  - High-Income Households (\$100K+): +10.7%
  - High School Graduates (no college): +11.2%
  - Black Participants: +12.8% (2.3 million more)
  - Hispanic Participants: +11.8% (2.8 million more)
- » Declines:
  - White Participants: -1.1% (1.3 million fewer)
  - Asian/Pacific Islander Participants: -382,000
  - Participants aged 45–54: -1.5%

### Household Participation

- » Families with Kids: 66% of households with children participate, the highest rate on record.
- » Kids as Influencers: Children’s high participation rates (>70%) appear to encourage parental participation.

### **Core Participants**

- » Core Base
  - Gained 5 million participants in 2024, reversing a decade-long decline.
- » Total Core Participants: 93.4 million, about one-third of all participants.
- » Core Growth Drivers:
  - Participants aged 18–24: +6%
  - Participants aged 65+: +4.2%
  - Black Core Participants: +11.4%
  - Hispanic Core Participants: +5.7%
  - Asian/Pacific Islander Core Participants: +2.1%
- » Core Declines:
  - Participants aged 6–12: -4.3%
  - Participants aged 45–54: -4%
  - Income <\$50K: -5.9%
  - White Core Participants: -2.9%

### **Popular Activities**

- » Most Popular:
  - Walking for fitness: 115 million participants (not counted in the core “outdoor” definition)
  - Hiking: 63 million participants (most popular outdoor-specific activity)
- » Gateway Activities: Hiking, camping, fishing, bicycling, and running added an average of 2.1 million participants each to the total outdoor participant count.
- » Cross-Participation: 91% of campers and 85% of hikers also engage in other outdoor activities.
- » Campers and Backpackers: Most likely to engage in multiple outdoor activities.

### **Indoor vs. Outdoor Participation**

- » Younger Americans: More likely to participate in outdoor vs. indoor recreation.
- » Older Americans (Especially Women): Prefer indoor recreation, though this trend may be reversing as older adults return to outdoor activities.
- » Seniors Getting Outdoors: Participation in the 65+ age group has more than doubled over the past decade, driven by health and lifestyle factors.

## North Carolina Participation and Trends

The 2025-2030 North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), titled *Shaping Outdoor Recreation from Mountains to Sea*, was published in October 2025. The project is a result of two years of research and public engagement, including a public survey and stakeholder interviews with representatives from land management, recreation, industry, transportation, hunting and fishing, groups advancing demographic diversity in the outdoors, conservation, stewardship, agriculture, education, and health industries. The plan frames parks and trails as tools for health, resiliency, equity, and economic development, emphasizing their role in business growth, tourism and community investment.

### Economic Contributions

The state of North Carolina has more than 3.5 million acres of land and water available for outdoor recreation through federal, state and local government. Estimates indicate outdoor recreation contributed approximately \$16.2 billion to North Carolina's economy in 2023 (representing 2% of state GDP; up from \$9.1 billion in 2012) and employs more than 150,000 residents, ranking the state 11th nationally.

Regionally, the 2023 Western North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey found residents and visitors made nearly 7 million trips to the mountains, generating \$3.3 billion in direct visitor spending and \$4.9 billion in total economic output, nearly 48,000 full-time equivalent jobs, \$1.48 billion in labor income, and \$197.5 million in tax revenue.

### Survey Response

Residents use different park systems at different intensities: over a third (35%) visited a local park more than eight times in the past year and another 32% went three to eight times, while 22% and 14% reported more than eight annual visits to state and national parks, respectively, confirming that local parks absorb the highest routine use while state and federal areas support somewhat less frequent, often more destination-oriented trips.

North Carolinians express strong support for their park systems—over 90% say local and state parks are extremely important and more than 80% rate public funding for state, local and federal park land and facilities as extremely or somewhat important—underscoring that frequent, varied park use and a rich mix of favorite activities are tightly linked to a sector that delivers substantial economic and quality-of-life benefits statewide.

The most common barriers to participation are:

- » Lack of time
- » Cost
- » Distance/transportation
- » Health/mobility
- » Safety concerns
- » Lack of information

The primary desires from survey participants include:

- » More trails and greenways, especially connections between existing facilities.
- » Investment in maintenance/renovation, not just new construction.
- » Focus on accessibility, equity, and partnerships.

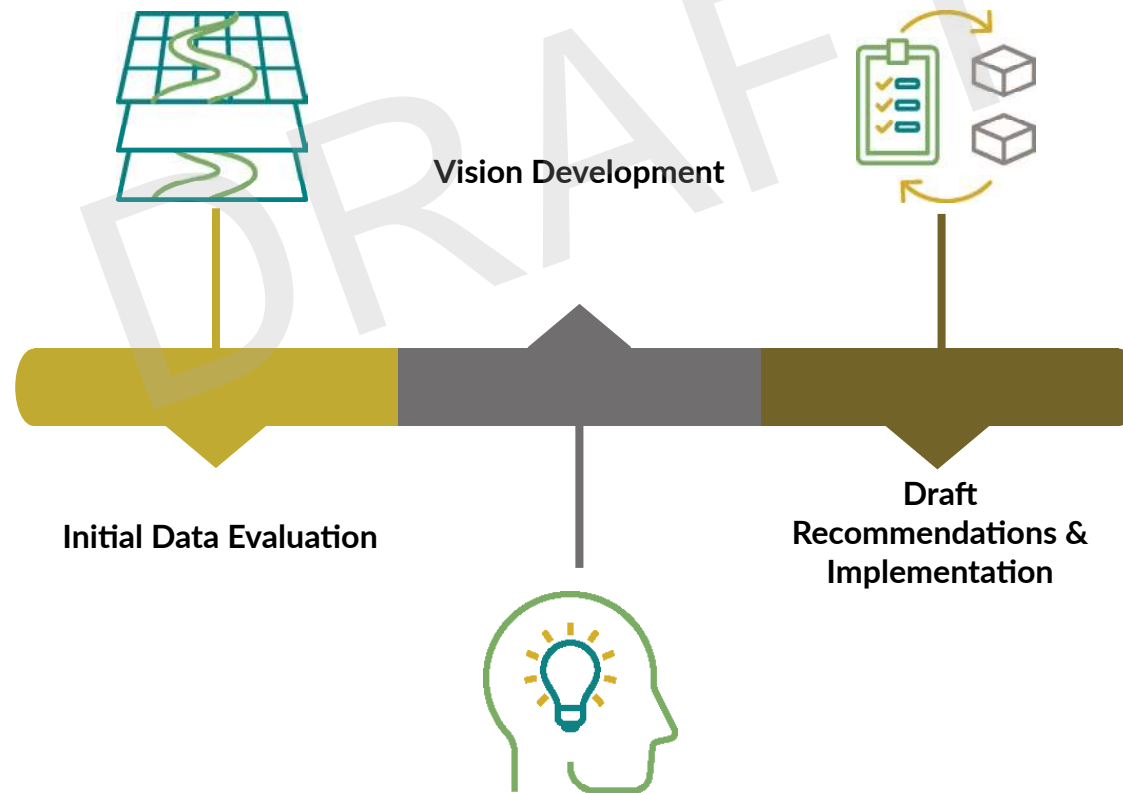


# **5** *Community Engagement*

## The Engagement Process

Public engagement serves as the foundation for this planning effort, as the document must represent the voices and desires of the Dallas community. Successful master plans are built by researching, understanding, and accurately addressing the needs of the community. Evaluating community-developed needs and opportunities is essential to gaining insight into the priorities, aspirations, and expectations of the plan.

The Dallas Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan was shaped by extensive input from community stakeholders and leadership. Engagement efforts included a virtual community survey, two public open houses, two work sessions with the Dallas Board of Aldermen, and four focus group interviews. A Steering Committee, comprised of community members, corresponded with the Project Team on a consistent basis to ensure that plan contents and outreach materials reflect the local perspectives and needs of Dallas stakeholders. These diverse outreach efforts ensured that plan development maintained fidelity to the core needs and desires of the Town of Dallas.



### Project Steering Committee Meeting #1

The Project Team met with the Plan’s Steering Committee on October 28th, 2025 following site evaluations of the Dallas’ parks system. This first meeting with this advisory group was intended to introduce its members to the Project Team, review the purpose plan, and discuss initial project steps. The group also reviewed a preliminary draft of the public survey to provide input and comment prior to launching it in the month of November.

Lastly, the committee conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats analysis (SWOT) to better understand the recreation network using the input of local experts and users. Staff worked with the Steering Committee to review network elements as defined herein:

- » **Strengths** – Existing/internal factors that support Dallas Parks.
- » **Weaknesses** – Existing/internal factors that need to be addressed.
- » **Opportunities** – New/external factors that could enhance the future of Dallas Parks.
- » **Threats** – New/external factors that could hurt the future of Dallas Parks.

The following table summarizes the primary feedback provided by the Steering Committee:

<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b>                  Walkability throughout Town                  Strong Youth Sports Programming                  Good Facilities                  Strong Software Utilization (RecDesk)</p>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b>                  Space &amp; Ability for Growth (Capacity)                  Department Website                  Land is Being Developed                  ADA Barriers                  Temporary Restrooms</p>
<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b>                  Growth &amp; Attractiveness of Dallas                  Wayfinding                  Department Communications                  Diversified Programming and Partnerships</p>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b>                  Staffing / Population Ratio</p>

The results of the SWOT analysis indicate that the Town and its Recreation Staff have a lot of strengths to build upon. Dallas has a strong network of centralized and connect park facilities. Recreation staff are proactive and communicative with the public. Committee members were mostly excited about what additional program and partnership opportunities the Town could realize, indicating the desire for diversified programming that provide recreation opportunities for users of all ages.

Many challenges facing Dallas revolve around its population growth and the need for more staffing, facilities, and programming. This population growth has also impacted the available land that could be acquired/developed for future recreation offerings. Many facilities in Dallas were also created before American Disability Act regulations, and thus barriers are present for those with mobility challenges amongst most Town facilities. Temporary bathrooms were also discussed as a weakness, creating a slightly off-putting image of existing facilities. Communications and the Town website were also mentioned as areas for growth.

**Board of Aldermen Work Session #1**

Following the initial meeting with the Steering Committee, the Project Team attended the Board of Aldermen Work Session on the night of October 28th. During the work session staff presented an overview of the project, including an introduction to the Project Team, key components of the plan document, initial evaluation efforts, and next steps in the process.

The team also used this work session as an opportunity to discuss overarching leadership goals for the Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Community leaders discussed the importance of understanding community desires and establishing a framework implementing plan recommendations. Leaders also acknowledged external recreation providers in proximity to Dallas and discussed how these facilities should be considered in the planning process.

In addition to discussing leadership priorities, the Project Team also facilitated a SWOT exercise with the Board of Aldermen and Mayor, just as it was done with the Steering Committee. A summary of the exercise findings is provided herein:

<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b>  <i>Great Staff</i>  <i>Interlocal Agreement</i>  <i>Clean Facilities</i>  <i>Proximity of Dallas Park</i></p>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b>  <i>Lack of Land</i>  <i>Education of Staff/Leadership Regarding Facilities Sizes and Considerations</i></p>
<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b>  <i>Accessible Playground</i>  <i>Marketing Recreation Offerings</i></p>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b>  <i>Costs &amp; Funding</i></p>

In summary, the Board of Aldermen Work Session provided an opportunity for the Project Team to introduce the major elements of the plan, initial evaluation efforts, and to discuss leadership perceptions of the parks network. Key takeaways from the exercises with leadership include:

- » Similar to the Steering Committee's SWOT exercise, excellent staff and nice facilities were noted by Town leadership.
- » Use of the interlocal agreement with Gaston County Schools and the proximity of Dallas Park also strengthen the Dallas network by offering additional facilities for recreation.
- » As with the Steering Committee's SWOT exercise, communications and the Town website were also mentioned as areas for growth. One Aldermen mentioned that Jagers Park is a very attractive amenity but does not get much use due to the public not being aware of its existence.

Challenges to land acquisition and facility development were discussed, too, which included finding available land and funding.

### **Community Survey**

A public survey was developed by the Project Team, Town staff, and the project Steering Committee to better understand recreation preferences and needs for the entire Dallas community. The survey was launched between November and December of 2025. 201 total households responded to the survey in this timeframe. A summary of the primary survey questions, and their responses, are provided below:

Question 1 first asked participants about how satisfied they were with the Town's parks and internal facilities. The majority of respondents (~48%) were "Very Satisfied" with the Town's facilities and about 44% were "Somewhat Satisfied". This indicates that roughly 92% of survey respondents believe that the Town facilities are in decent condition.

Similarly, Question 2 asked participants about their satisfaction with the recreation programs and Town-wide special events. Survey participants appeared to have similar opinions of Dallas' programs and events as they did with the Town's facilities. The majority of participants (~51%) were "Very Satisfied" and ~34% were "Somewhat Satisfied". About 11% of participants indicated that they had not participated in such events at the time of the survey.

Question 3 asked survey participants who selected "Not Satisfied" with park facilities, programs, or special events to describe the source of dissatisfaction. Survey respondents expressed a variety of concerns centralized on facility conditions, accessibility, and park features. One of the most common responses involved the use of portable restrooms at Town parks instead of permanent facilities. Furthermore, access within park facilities was noted as a barrier by several users. For example, write-in responses noted that while Dennis Franklin Gymnasium has permanent bathroom facilities, they are not easily accessible by those with mobility issues. Furthermore, access between facilities at the Carr School Fields was noted as an addition challenge for those with mobility issues. Some users also noted specific enhancements, including lighting for Cloninger Park and the need for shaded seating. In general, respondents desired larger more balanced facilities in Town that provide accessible features, places for programming to occur, and that can compete with regional offerings.

On the programming and special events side, respondents largely described the need for additional staff and support for the Town's existing programs. Some respondents noted inconsistent quality amongst the volunteers and the need for additional structure from staff. Participants also desired additional programming opportunities, with some noting that they attend other municipalities due to the breadth of offerings provided. Other respondents commented that neighboring communities are providing larger budgets for their Parks and Recreation offerings which may account for the perceived change in quality. Regarding facilities, some participants noted that gymnasium and field bookings were leading to inconsistent areas for practice, and that new facilities could alleviate this challenge. In general, write-in responses related to programming challenges appear to largely reflect a desire for increased staffing, programs, and facilities in Dallas in order to compete with external program providers.

Question 4 asked about uses of Dallas' existing facilities, identifying how often survey participants are using the Town's facilities. The following table summarizes the annual visits to each park based on participant responses.

<b>Park</b>	<b>Weekly or Monthly Visits</b>	<b>Annual Visits or Not Visited</b>
<b>Cloninger</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Carr School Fields</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Dennis Franklin Gym</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Jagger</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>74%</b>

The results indicated that Cloninger Park and Carr School Fields are seeing consistent use on at least a monthly basis by a majority of participants. Dennis Franklin Gymnasium is also experiencing regular visitation amongst the survey respondents, albeit slightly less than the previous two parks. This is most likely due to range of facilities or passive recreation opportunities at the gymnasium. As a whole, this data illustrates that many of Dallas' facilities are utilized and enjoyed by the public.

Conversely, Jagger Park is experiencing notably less visits from survey respondents. Park evaluations outlined earlier in this plan indicate that the park has many desirable amenities, is kept clean by staff, and features both passive and active recreation opportunities for park users. As such, lower visitations by survey respondents may indicate a lack of park awareness, easier access to downtown facilities like Cloninger Park, or even perceptions of safety.

Looking ahead, Question 5 asked participants to list their household's top three desired facilities for Dallas' future. The following table illustrates the top choices provided by the survey respondents.

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Survey Rank</b>
<i>Recreation Center Expansion</i>	<b>1</b>
<i>Greenways &amp; Trails</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Playground Equipment</i>	<b>3</b>
<i>Baseball/Softball Fields</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Multi-Purpose Fields</i>	<b>5</b>
<i>Aquatic Facilities</i>	<b>6</b>
<i>Dog Park</i>	<b>7 (tie)</b>
<i>Basketball Courts</i>	<b>7 (tie)</b>
<i>Track</i>	<b>9</b>
<i>Skatepark</i>	<b>10</b>

Of note, write-in responses were largely associated with permanent bathrooms and sidewalks/accessibility.

Similarly, Question 6 asked participants to list their household's top three desired programming types for the future of Dallas.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Survey Rank</b>
<i>Youth Athletics</i>	<b>1</b>
<i>Youth Programs</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Town-wide Special Events</i>	<b>3</b>
<i>Outdoor / Adventure Programs</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Specialized Classes (Tai-Chi, Cooking, etc.)</i>	<b>5</b>

Survey responses indicate that there is a large emphasis on continued youth programming. Special events remain an important consideration among survey respondents, as indicated by its importance in this question and the write-in responses in Question 3.

Question 7 of the survey asked participants if they would support securing or acquiring land to develop connections between parks, community facilities, and neighborhoods. Initial evaluation of the Dallas network identified opportunities to round out the transportation network, and this survey question was intended to gauge community interest in forwarding this objective.

Over 78% of respondents indicated that they would be in favor of securing and/or acquiring land to develop these connections, indicating an overall interest in recreation connectivity. Only about 7% of respondents stated that they would not be favorable of acquiring additional land for connectivity. Of note, about 15% of respondents indicated that they were unsure if they would support this effort or not. This illustrates that specific mechanisms and strategies should be presented to the public to further understand favorability.

Question 8 identified various funding sources that could be employed to help fund park, program, and network expansion in Dallas. Participants were asked to rank various funding sources on their desire to employ them for Dallas. The table below illustrates the respondent's favorability of funding mechanisms:

<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Survey Rank</b>
<b>Matching Grants for Recreation</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Capital Improvement Bonds</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Developer-required Infrastructure</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Property Tax Rate for Parks/Recreation</b>	<b>4</b>

Regarding recreation department communications, Question 9 provided a list of existing and potential outreach methods that could be employed by Dallas Parks and Recreation to communicate with recreation stakeholders. Participants were asked to rank these methods of communication based on what would be the most well received. The table below illustrates the survey participant's favorability of the various methods of communication:

<b>Method of Communication</b>	<b>Survey Rank</b>
<b>Town Social Media</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Email</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Town Website</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>School Emails/Newsletters</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Conventional Mail</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Marketing Materials at Town Locations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Newspaper Advertisements</b>	<b>7</b>

While demographic questions will be provided in **Appendix A**, it is important to note that Question 10 of the survey asked respondents what their relationship to the Town of Dallas was. About 19% of survey participants indicated that they are visitors to the Town, illustrating a notable number of external recreation users.

In summary, the public survey results indicate that:

- » Stakeholders are largely favorable of current facilities and programs offered by the Town.
- » Primary concerns with existing facilities are the lack of permanent restroom facilities and accessibility.
- » Jagers Park is underutilized and may require specific considerations to increase usership.
- » Respondents greatly desire larger and contemporary recreation spaces, including the #1 need of Recreation Center Expansion.
- » Greenways and trail connectivity is greatly valued by the respondents, with those facilities being the second most valued future facility, and 3/4ths of respondents indicating the willingness to acquire more land for connectivity enhancements.
- » Youth programming continues to be the focal point of Town programming needs.
- » Participants noted the need for additional staff and funding to compete with regional providers. Grants were identified as the most valued mechanism to support future growth.
- » The Town website, email list, and social media pages are the most successful means of departmental communications.

Please see **Appendix A** for the complete survey results, including survey demographic questions.



Survey respondents generally enjoy and appreciate Dallas' events, including the Summer Concert Series and Cruise-In, shown here. Credit: Town of Dallas

## **Focus Group Interviews**

### **Youth Generational Cohort**

The Youth Generational Cohort focus group interview was inclusive of parents and coaches of children participating in Dallas Parks and Recreation programs. Engaging with parents and program volunteers throughout the creation of this Master Plan is critical because parents provide insight into the needs, preferences, and challenges faced by youth in the community. This perspective is very important not only because Dallas prides itself as a strong youth athletics program provider in the region, but because parents are often the decision-makers for program enrollment, transportation to programs, and overall participation.

When asked about strengths, participants highlighted the excellent work of current staff, noting several areas being improved compared to previous years. Programs in Dallas, specifically soccer, are valued for their quality. Staff dedication and knowledge were recognized, especially given the limited resources. When asked about youth recreation challenges, participants noted that current staff often wear multiple hats, including program management and facility maintenance. This challenge becomes more visible during overlapping sport seasons, such as soccer and baseball, when scheduling, field preparation, and program oversight can become more hectic and difficult to manage. In regards to future priorities, the cohort identified the need to enhance existing youth programming experiences through facility and staff investments. Permanent bathrooms, ADA accessibility, and increased staff to facilitate youth programming were identified as ways improve the experience for children and parents alike.

### **Special Events Cohort**

The Special Events Cohort focus group interview included program participants and parents of children living in Dallas. Interviewing attendees of the community's special events helped provide insight into the experiences of these events and can provide insights into program improvement and expansion.

The cohort emphasized that existing special events are well-attended and fun. Participants enjoyed the large events the Town hosts, but also noted that smaller, volunteer-driven events like a daddy-daughter dance, board game night, and a craft fair could be well received. Participants also noted the strong connection and coordination of staff, Town leadership, local businesses, and residents for these larger events. However, diversified event communications were noted as an area of improvement, as some community members may not use social media to learn about community events.

Participants noted the need for additional recreation staff to assist with event programming, as current staff are limited with existing responsibilities. The cohort noted that the use of an organized volunteer group, coupled with a part-time or full-time position would greatly allow the Town to expand and diversify its current programming portfolio. This would allow Dallas to continue developing programs that support local businesses, bring the community together, and support the family-friendly culture of the Town. Specific opportunities noted by the cohort were a Summer Fair and community service events such as Angel Tree through the Boys and Girls Club.

### **Young Adults Cohort**

The Young Adults Cohort included Dallas residents who represent early-career and young adult households. The cohort noticed a shift for the better in Dallas Parks and Recreation over the last 5 years. This is mainly in part due to the current staff that arrived around that time. Members of this cohort also notices the additional program offerings, specifically youth athletics that created a positive impact in the Dallas community. Members also noted how their experience in recent years with the events the Parks and Recreation Department hosts have proven successful.

In terms of opportunities, this cohort emphasized their vision of continuing to create annual traditions, specifically revolving around the holidays. In the past, there have been events hosted, but they lacked formalization. Specific unofficial annual events led by members of this cohort include the “Dallas Turkey Trot.” Events like this running/walking race can help create memories for members of the community. The cohort noted that a contributor to the establishment of these annual events or even the understanding from the larger community on all recreation offerings in the town of Dallas could be the addition of personnel, specifically a dedicated marketing staff member.

### **Seniors Cohort**

The Seniors Focus Group included long-time residents with extensive knowledge of the history of Dallas Parks and recreation. Participants emphasized the need for expanded pickleball opportunities, including dedicated courts, and discussed the potential to use existing sewer outfall corridors to create a connected greenway and trail network. Improved trail connections to Uptown Dallas were identified as a priority to enhance access to parks and community destination, such as downtown Dallas.

The cohort also expressed interest in grant opportunities to bring recommendations from the plan to life. Specific funding opportunities mentioned include PARTF, that can help advance Dallas Parks system improvements. Acquisition of future parkland to support the growing Dallas community was also mentioned by the cohort. With continued growth and only one existing indoor recreation space in the Dennis Franklin Gymnasium, members of the cohort identified the need for another indoor space, such as a gym, that could accommodate additional programs. Other diverse program opportunities mentioned by the cohort included adult yoga and specialty workout courses. Lastly, the cohort expressed a desire to volunteer in support of parks and recreation. Members mentioned that recent attempts to offer volunteer services have been met with liability concerns.

### **Project Steering Committee Meeting #2**

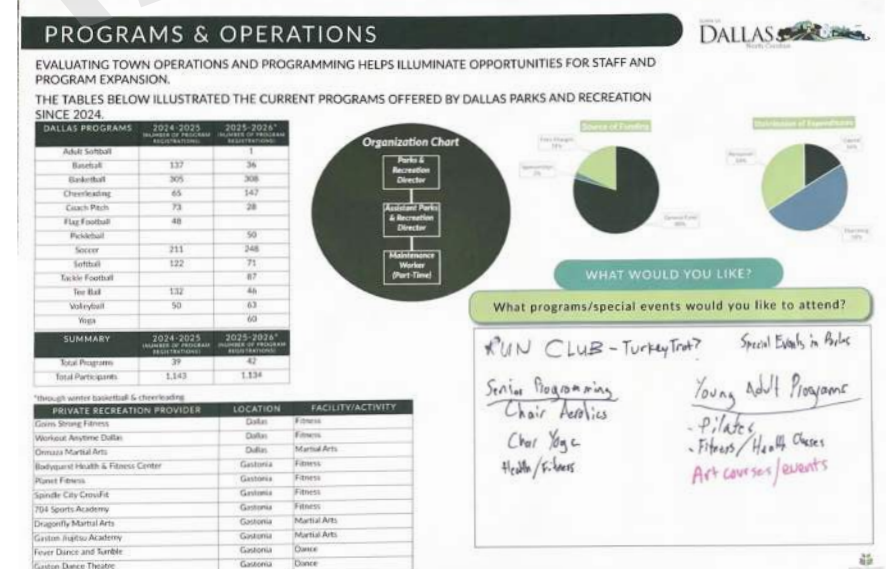
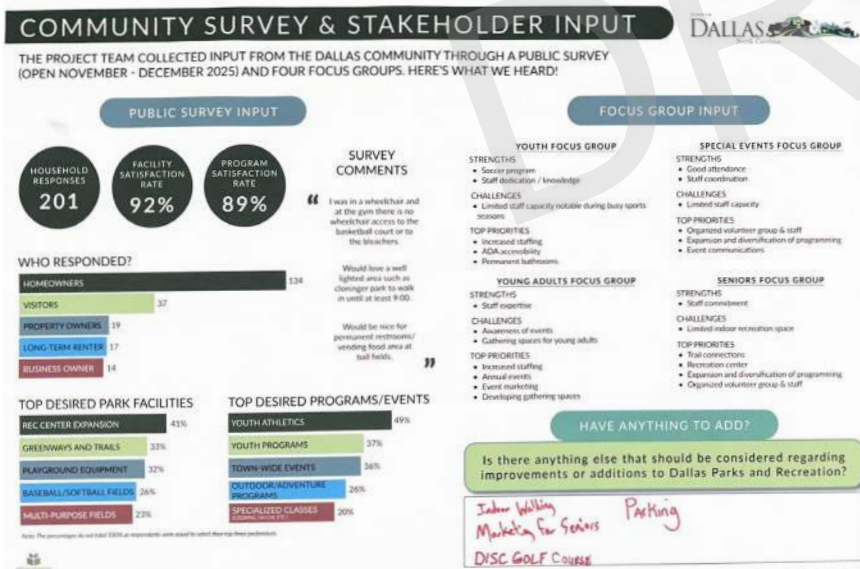
The Project Team met with the Plan’s Steering Committee on January 5th for its second meeting as a group. This meeting allowed for discussion on several important topics as the Master Plan progressed, which included, but were not limited to a review of the project schedule, discussed the community survey results, and draft plan chapters that had been assembled so far. The committee also discussed emerging themes as a result of the survey responses and what information would be shared with the Dallas Community during the January Open House event.

## Existing Conditions Workshop

On January 21, 2026, the Project Team hosted the Existing Conditions Workshop at Dallas Historic Courthouse between the hours of 4 and 7 PM. The purpose of this event was to introduce residents and visitors to the project and to solicit input and initial feedback about Dallas' parks and recreation facilities and programs.

Attendees reviewed boards detailing (1) the purpose, process, and anticipated schedule of the Master Plan project; (2) demographic trends; (3) staff evaluations of park facilities and level of service (LOS) analyses; (4) benchmarking against National Recreation & Parks Association (NRPA) averages and recommendations; and (5) program evaluations. Each board had space for attendee input and one board was reserved for attendee input and thoughts.

Attendees of the workshop noted a need for new park infrastructure including permanent restrooms, lighting, and seating. Ball parks also need new score boards and upgraded press boxes. New facilities expressed as being desirable to the community included a dog park, skate park, pump track, disc golf course, and expanded greenway connectivity. Attendees also suggested the development of a pocket park on the lot adjacent to the Dallas Historic Courthouse, potentially with sound systems designed into the landscaping. Feedback related to programming included the need to expand health, fitness, and recreation opportunities for seniors and young adults. Age-specific programs specifically named included chair yoga, chair aerobics, and general health classes for seniors, and Pilates, fitness/health classes, and art events for young adults. Attendees also underscored the need for consistent, accessible marketing, particularly to better reach senior residents.



Input from the first public workshop included the desire for additional young adult and senior programming and new outdoor recreation amenities. Credit: WithersRavenel

### ***Project Steering Committee Meeting #3***

The Project Team met with the Plan's Steering Committee on February 3, 2026 for its third meeting as a group. This purpose of this meeting was to review the Project Team's work to date, including a summary of findings from the community survey and Existing Conditions Workshop, preliminary vision elements, and a list of proposed priority recommendations. The Steering Committee discussed the importance of partnerships and consistent marketing of Parks & Recreation programs and events.

### ***Board of Aldermen Work Session #2***

On February 24, 2026, the Project Team hosted a second virtual work session with the Board of Aldermen. At the meeting, the Project Team reviewed work to date, summarized feedback collected at the second public meeting, and presented the draft Vision statement along with preliminary goals, objectives, and action items. The Board of Aldermen provided comment on the project process and expressed general agreement with the plan's direction.

### ***Recommendations & Implementation Workshop***

The Project Team hosted the Recommendations & Implementation Workshop on April 22, 2026, from 4 to 7 PM at the Dallas Historic Courthouse. The workshop provided an opportunity for residents and stakeholders to review and comment on the Plan's goals, objectives, and action items.

Poster boards displayed work completed to date, the Plan's Vision Statement, and a set of goals with supporting objectives and action items designed to address community needs and priorities. Attendees were encouraged to review the materials and provide input by marking the boards with sticky notes and sticky dots to help identify actions they felt the Town and Parks & Recreation Department should prioritize over the next ten years.

Attendees generally agreed with the recommendations and action items presented on the boards. One attendee expressed interest in direct engagement and volunteer avenues with the Town's Parks & Recreation department—specifically the Adopt-A-Park program—and the need for playground equipment designed to help children develop motor and sensory skills. The Project Team added these recommendations to the playbook in Chapter 6.

### ***Project Steering Committee Meeting #4***

The final Steering Committee Meeting was held virtually on May 1, 2026. At this meeting, the Project Team reviewed all community input collected to date—including from the Recommendations & Implementation Workshop held in mid-April—and discussed remaining steps in the Master Planning process, consisting of review periods by the Parks & Recreation Department, Steering Committee, and the public, and subsequent adoption by Town Council. The Steering expressed satisfaction with work to date and the anticipated plan for review and adoption.

### IMAGINING THE FUTURE OF DALLAS P&R

**ADD YOUR VOTE!**  
ADD ONE DOT TO TWO ACTIONS YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR DALLAS PARKS & RECREATION IN THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS.

Add any additional thoughts on a sticky note!

**1** Capture Park at Castle Lane to host community events and create green recreation facilities. Credit: WithersRavenel

**2** Establish volunteer group and "Friends of Dallas Park" organization to assist with events, fundraising, & program delivery. Credit: Friends of Dallas Park & Recreation

**3** Collaborate with the County and regional partners to share facilities like Dallas Park, and to coordinate capital programming opportunities. Credit: Friends of Dallas Park & Recreation

**4** Develop a Pocket Recreation Park to continue expanding the recreation network in the Park area. Credit: WithersRavenel

**5** Utilize the Town's Recreation resources to emphasize private management utilization of parks and trails. Credit: WithersRavenel

**6** Hire additional staff for staffing, maintenance, & programming. Credit: WithersRavenel

**7** Conduct site analysis for future development of future recreation centers, community centers, dog park, disc golf and pickleball facilities. Credit: WithersRavenel

**8** Complete expansion of existing Little Long Creek trail and explore connections between Woodville Drive and adjacent Park to connect Dallas neighborhoods to parks and recreation. Credit: WithersRavenel

**9** Complete implementation of ADA Transition Plan at Dallas Parks to improve accessibility. Credit: WithersRavenel

### GOALS 1 & 2: OPERATIONS & FACILITIES

**HOW WILL WE GET THERE?**  
EACH GOAL WILL BE ACHIEVED AS DALLAS PARKS & RECREATION FULFILLS THE SUBSEQUENT OBJECTIVES, BROKEN DOWN INTO SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE ACTION ITEMS.

**ADD YOUR VOTE!**  
PLACE ONE STICKY DOT PER GOAL ON THE OBJECTIVE YOU CONSIDER MOST IMPORTANT FOR DALLAS P&R OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS.

**ANYTHING ELSE WE SHOULD CONSIDER?**  
Add your thoughts on a sticky note!

GOAL 1	GOAL 2																								
<p><b>GOAL 1</b> Dallas Parks &amp; Recreation operates efficiently, connects with the community, and serves as a leader in the regional recreation network.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>OBJECTIVE</th> <th>SAMPLE ACTIONS</th> <th>ADD YOUR VOTE!</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>ENSURE STAFF CAPACITY MEETS DALLAS' NEEDS.</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire one staff member to support current workload</li> <li>Continue to evaluate staff capacity and growth needs</li> <li>Meet quarterly with Gaston County Parks &amp; Recreation</li> <li>Evaluate needs for equipment replacement (e.g., mower)</li> </ul> </td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>ENHANCE VISIBILITY OF TOWN PARKS AND PROGRAMS.</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a digital marketing strategy for parks, programs, and events</li> <li>Publish an annual program and event flyer</li> </ul> </td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>PARTNER WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ADVOCACY GROUPS.</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a "Friends of Dallas Parks" association to support staff and fundraising</li> <li>Establish an "Adopt-A-Park" program to support park maintenance</li> <li>Establish recurring meetings with accessibility-focused advocacy groups</li> </ul> </td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	OBJECTIVE	SAMPLE ACTIONS	ADD YOUR VOTE!	ENSURE STAFF CAPACITY MEETS DALLAS' NEEDS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire one staff member to support current workload</li> <li>Continue to evaluate staff capacity and growth needs</li> <li>Meet quarterly with Gaston County Parks &amp; Recreation</li> <li>Evaluate needs for equipment replacement (e.g., mower)</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>	ENHANCE VISIBILITY OF TOWN PARKS AND PROGRAMS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a digital marketing strategy for parks, programs, and events</li> <li>Publish an annual program and event flyer</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>	PARTNER WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ADVOCACY GROUPS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a "Friends of Dallas Parks" association to support staff and fundraising</li> <li>Establish an "Adopt-A-Park" program to support park maintenance</li> <li>Establish recurring meetings with accessibility-focused advocacy groups</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>	<p><b>GOAL 2</b> Parks and recreation facilities address the unique needs of all Dallas' residents and visitors.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>OBJECTIVE</th> <th>SAMPLE ACTIONS</th> <th>ADD YOUR VOTE!</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>ADD QUALITY OF LIFE AMENITIES.</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construct permanent bathroom facilities at parks</li> <li>Develop internal access, lighting, seating, and waste amenities</li> <li>Implement ADA Transition Plan, focusing on Dennis Franklin Gym</li> </ul> </td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>IMPROVE TRAIL CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS.</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Little Long Creek Greenway and trail connection to Jagers Park</li> <li>Implement the Town's Bicycle &amp; Pedestrian Plan (2022)</li> <li>Work with regional partners to link Dallas trail network to the Carolina Thread Trail</li> </ul> </td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>PREPARE FOR INCREASED DEMAND.</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a feasibility study for a new recreation facility</li> <li>Develop a pocket park in Courthouse Square for events</li> <li>Identify opportunities for new amenities like a dog park, disc golf course, and pickleball</li> <li>Create conceptual designs for new recreation center</li> </ul> </td> <td><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	OBJECTIVE	SAMPLE ACTIONS	ADD YOUR VOTE!	ADD QUALITY OF LIFE AMENITIES.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construct permanent bathroom facilities at parks</li> <li>Develop internal access, lighting, seating, and waste amenities</li> <li>Implement ADA Transition Plan, focusing on Dennis Franklin Gym</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>	IMPROVE TRAIL CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Little Long Creek Greenway and trail connection to Jagers Park</li> <li>Implement the Town's Bicycle &amp; Pedestrian Plan (2022)</li> <li>Work with regional partners to link Dallas trail network to the Carolina Thread Trail</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>	PREPARE FOR INCREASED DEMAND.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a feasibility study for a new recreation facility</li> <li>Develop a pocket park in Courthouse Square for events</li> <li>Identify opportunities for new amenities like a dog park, disc golf course, and pickleball</li> <li>Create conceptual designs for new recreation center</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>
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ENHANCE VISIBILITY OF TOWN PARKS AND PROGRAMS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a digital marketing strategy for parks, programs, and events</li> <li>Publish an annual program and event flyer</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>																							
PARTNER WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ADVOCACY GROUPS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a "Friends of Dallas Parks" association to support staff and fundraising</li> <li>Establish an "Adopt-A-Park" program to support park maintenance</li> <li>Establish recurring meetings with accessibility-focused advocacy groups</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>																							
OBJECTIVE	SAMPLE ACTIONS	ADD YOUR VOTE!																							
ADD QUALITY OF LIFE AMENITIES.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construct permanent bathroom facilities at parks</li> <li>Develop internal access, lighting, seating, and waste amenities</li> <li>Implement ADA Transition Plan, focusing on Dennis Franklin Gym</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>																							
IMPROVE TRAIL CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Little Long Creek Greenway and trail connection to Jagers Park</li> <li>Implement the Town's Bicycle &amp; Pedestrian Plan (2022)</li> <li>Work with regional partners to link Dallas trail network to the Carolina Thread Trail</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>																							
PREPARE FOR INCREASED DEMAND.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a feasibility study for a new recreation facility</li> <li>Develop a pocket park in Courthouse Square for events</li> <li>Identify opportunities for new amenities like a dog park, disc golf course, and pickleball</li> <li>Create conceptual designs for new recreation center</li> </ul>	<input type="radio"/>																							

# Town of Dallas Comprehensive Master Plan Survey

The Town of Dallas is developing a Parks & Recreation Master Plan—and your input is essential. Please take 5 minutes to complete the survey.

Questions?  
 awallace@dallasnc.net  
 mdenham@dallasnc.net  
 704-922-3176 ext. 234

Left: Input from the second public workshop included priority of trail connectivity and access, and establishing additional volunteer avenues. Credit: WithersRavenel  
 Right: Post on the Town's website promoting the online survey. Credit: Town of Dallas



**6**

# ***Implementing the Plan***

# Bringing the Vision to Life

## Defining the Implementation Framework

The Dallas Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan will guide future policy, facility investment, and programming for the Dallas community and beyond. This chapter contains the overarching Vision for Dallas Parks & Recreation, detailed through strategic Goals, measurable Objectives, and tangible Action Items. It represents the culmination of geospatial and demographic research, regional and nationwide benchmarking, and iterative development with the project Steering Committee, Dallas stakeholders, and Town leadership.

The **Vision** is a comprehensive, forward-looking statement that expresses what Dallas ultimately strives to accomplish in the future. Its purpose is to provide long-term direction, inspire stakeholders and community members, and articulate a clear picture for the desired future of Dallas Parks & Recreation.

- **Goals** are broad, guiding principles of the plan, addressing community-identified needs and informing department-specific strategies to fulfill the Vision. Goals are the foundation for more tangible Objectives and Action Items.
- **Objectives** are measurable steps that break goals into clear, trackable projects, programs, or policies.
- **Actions** are the concrete tasks undertaken to achieve each Objective. Actions define the who, what, and how.

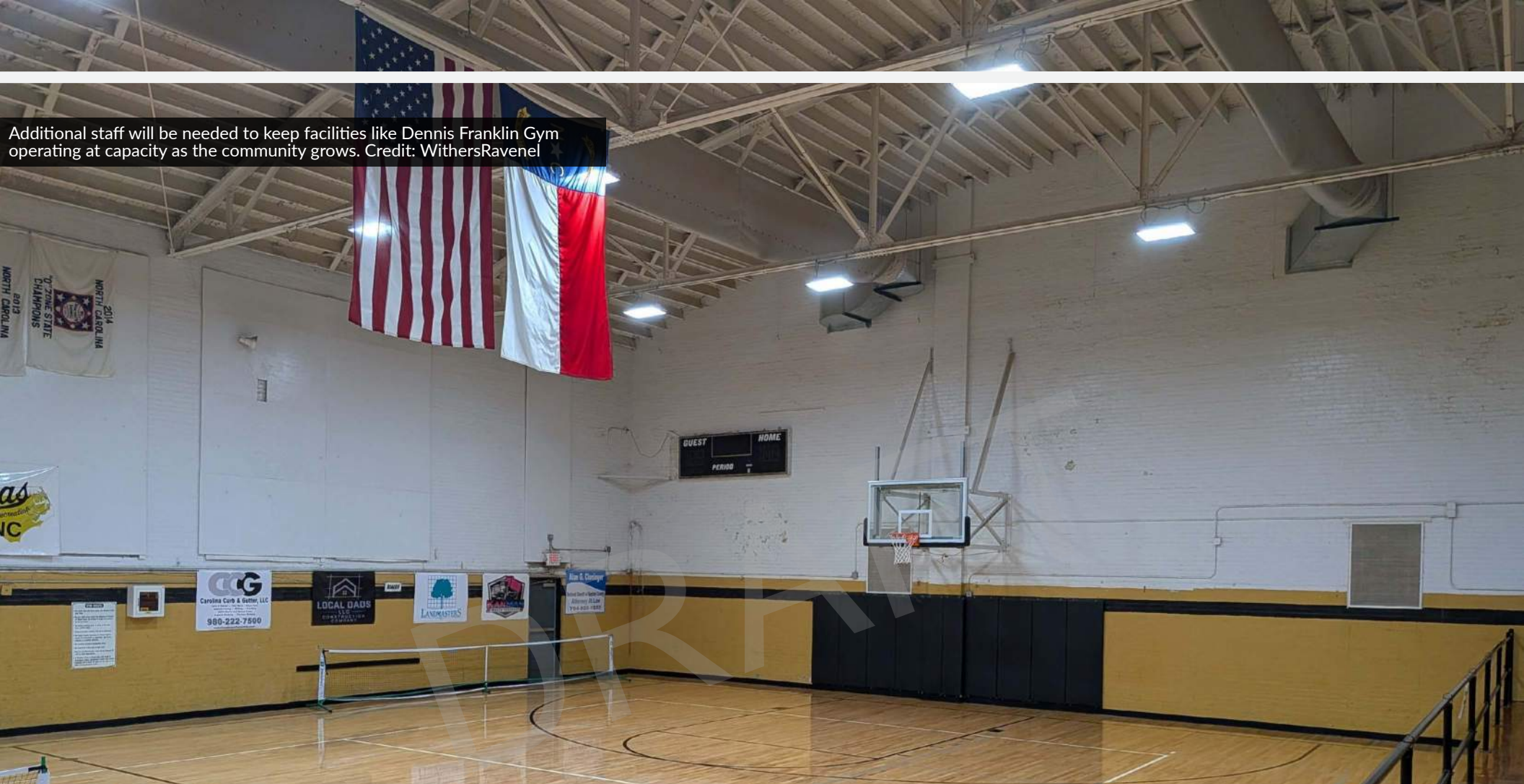
## The Vision for Dallas Parks & Recreation System

*“The Dallas Parks & Recreation system will be built on a strong, and appropriately staffed organization that can sustainably operate current and future programs and facilities. Through investment in people, improving accessibility and comfort in all parks, expanding connectivity, and strategic collaboration with partners, the system will enhance the quality of life for all those who call Dallas home.”*

## From Vision to Reality

To realize the Vision, Dallas Parks & Recreation will direct staff energy and future investment toward four recurring themes noted by stakeholders and community participants during the creation of this Master Plan. This chapter introduces one goal per theme (indicated with the graphics below), with supporting objectives and action items to achieve the goal.





***Goal 1: Dallas Parks & Recreation operates efficiently, connects with the community, and serves as a leader in the regional recreation network.***

Goal 1 focuses on strengthening the internal operations and coordination of Dallas Parks & Recreation, reflecting key themes from the planning process related to staff capacity, volunteer engagement, and the promotion of facilities and programming.



**Objective 1.1: Ensure staff capacity meets Dallas' needs.**

**Action 1.1.1: Initially hire one full-time or part-time staff professional to support communications and programming expansion.**

According to National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) data and other similarly sized communities, Dallas has three fewer employees dedicated to parks and recreation than communities of a similar size. As it stands, the Dallas Parks & Recreation Department continues to provide valuable services and programs to the community, but is operating at full capacity and struggling to maintain the current system, let alone expand it. A new staff person could lighten the burden and support with three primary responsibilities: marketing, program/special event support, and volunteer organization.

Regarding marketing, feedback from focus groups and the public online survey underscore the need for consistent interaction through a “public information officer.” In the online survey, respondents ranked Town social media as their most preferred way to receive information about parks, programs, and special events, followed by email and the Town website. It is also important to consider accessibility of information, specifically for residents who do not own digital devices or who prefer non-digital communication. Feedback during the first public open house underscored the need for more consistent, targeted communication with seniors, who may prefer print over digital media. While digital outreach should be prioritized, Dallas Parks & Recreation should continue partnering with local organizations and community groups to distribute information through physical media such as newsletters and mail.

In terms of program/special events, this position could help with coordination, logistics, partnerships, and marketing. Currently, Dallas Parks & Recreation offers several recreation activities and special events throughout the year, but additional staff capacity could help build partnerships with local businesses or nonprofits to introduce new events (see [Action 3.1.1](#) and [Action 3.3.1](#)) or encourage event sponsorships. Additionally, as the Town adds volunteer opportunities, this role could help facilitate fundraising events with the newly formed Friends of Dallas Parks (see [Action 1.3.1](#)), and track/publicize volunteer activities through the new “Adopt a Park” program (see [Action 1.3.2](#)).

**Action 1.1.2: Continue evaluation and hiring of staff as recreation needs grow.**

Growing the Dallas Parks & Recreation Department is a top priority for the Town, especially as the population of Dallas is projected to grow through 2040. As the Town and County continues to grow, Dallas' Parks & Recreation staff team must prepare to scale in size and capacity. To prepare for growing maintenance needs associated with higher demand of parks and programs, Dallas Parks & Recreation should establish a target metric for the ratio of maintenance staff to park acreage. Per previous studies done by the NRPA and local assessments completed by Ballard Kind & Associates, a good baseline is 1 staff person per 20 acres of parkland. When determining this metric, the Parks & Recreation Department should consider the amenities and required management of specific parks or facilities. For example, Jagers Park—with walking trail, pavilion, basketball courts, and ballfield—may require more maintenance a smaller pocket park.

It is recommended that Dallas perform an annual evaluation of staff functions to identify workload capacity, review attendance and participation trends, and plan for future hiring based on concrete program or facility needs. This evaluation can include number of programs, number of cancelled programs, total enrollment, waitlists, and age groups served. If tracked annually, the department can assess program trends and estimate a program's lifecycle from initiation, through growth and maturation, to decline and (when necessary) elimination.

**Action 1.1.3: Conduct quarterly meetings with Gaston County Parks & Recreation to identify and promote regional recreation opportunities.**

Much of Gaston County's population is served by municipal parks and facilities, with the County Parks and Recreation Department supplying additional recreational opportunities in the form of large district-scale parks and regional trail networks. Therefore, regional collaboration is necessary to reduce duplicative services and continue to expand program offerings. To better serve the regional population, County identified collaboration with municipal parks and recreation departments as a priority in Gaston County's Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2017).

Dallas Parks & Recreation and Gaston County Parks and Recreation Department should maintain consistent, transparent communication to diversify recreational opportunities for Dallas residents and make sure programs and services appropriately address the needs of the population. Working together can allow for expanded program offerings, increased community awareness of facilities and projects, and critical knowledge- and resource-sharing between staff. Additionally, Gaston County can provide technical assistance to Dallas in the design and construction of new recreational facilities and help the Town pursue funding opportunities through joint grant applications.

**Action 1.1.4: Invest in a maintenance management system and upgrade equipment, including a new mower in year five.**

Regular evaluation of maintenance equipment helps staff stay ahead of repairs and avoid disruptions during peak seasons. By tracking repair history, hours of use, and equipment performance, Dallas Parks & Recreation can anticipate repairs and replacement of assets like mowers, weedwhackers, chainsaws, and blowers. Specifically, the Town should plan for the purchase of a new mower about midway through plan implementation (in 2031), so that budgeting for this equipment can be done gradually and predictably.

**Objective 1.2: Enhance visibility of Town parks and programs.**

**Action 1.2.1: Implement a digital marketing strategy to promote facilities, programs, and special events.**

A digital marketing strategy could help Dallas Parks & Recreation reach more residents and visitors. Using social media, email, newsletters, and the Town website, Dallas Parks & Recreation can highlight upcoming programs, special events, and scheduling changes. Digital media allows for quick, real-time updates, and gives people another avenue to interact with the Parks & Recreation team. Weekly content with consistent branding can go a long way to build awareness of Dallas' offerings. Over time, this strategy can increase participation and foster transparency between the Town and community. To ensure resulting marketing materials are accessible for all, the digital marketing strategy should include templates prescribing minimum font sizes, appropriate colors, and formatting that meet ADA standards described in Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA.

**Action 1.2.2: Develop and distribute an annual flyer for physical advertising of Dallas Parks & Recreation opportunities and facilities.**

An annual flyer ensures that all residents—including those who prefer to rely on non-digital communication—receive up-to-date information about parks, programs, and special events. The flyer can be distributed at schools, community centers, and local businesses to maximize visibility. Offering both digital and physical outreach materials supports equitable access to information. The flyer should adhere to the standards of Dallas' digital engagement strategy to support accessibility and brand recognition of the Parks & Recreation Department.

### Objective 1.3: Partner with local organizations and advocacy groups.

#### Action 1.3.1: Establish “Friends of Dallas Parks” group to facilitate volunteer assistance, community fundraising, and staff support.

A “Friends of Dallas Parks” group, operating as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, can support park improvements, volunteer activities, and special event planning. The Friends of Dallas Park can become an advocate for the Town’s parks and recreation system by organizing fundraising events like outdoor movie nights or buy-a-bench campaigns. The Town currently has an unofficial Turkey Trot, which the group could make an official, Town-partnered and business-sponsored annual event. The Friends can also support with maintenance activities through events like seasonal clean-ups or tree planting days. At a minimum, activities should be communicated with and organized through a Dallas Parks & Recreation point person (see [Action 1.1.1](#)). Dallas Parks & Recreation should also require volunteers to sign a waiver to protect the Town from liability (see example in [Appendix B](#)).

#### Action 1.3.2: Establish an “Adopt-A-Park” program to support staff with park and trail maintenance.

Adopt-A-Park Programs provide residents and local organizations with opportunities to support their Parks & Recreation Department while not requiring a 501(c)(3) organization status. By “adopting” a park, volunteers (either as individuals, organizations, or businesses) agree to maintain it by picking up litter, planting flowers, painting, and other beautification activities. Commitment periods for maintenance responsibilities are typically one year.

*Case Study: Gaston County’s Adopt-A-Park Program encourages individuals and organizations to make a one- or two-year commitment to maintain a park facility, during which the group is expected to complete a minimum of four projects per year. Each Adopt-A-Park group must appoint a contact person to organize the projects and log volunteer service hours, using forms provided by Gaston County Parks and Recreation. A sign, posted in a prominent part of the adopted park, recognizes the volunteering group.*

#### Action 1.3.3: Establish quarterly or bi-annual meetings with local accessibility-focused advocacy groups to discuss approaches to park access.

Quarterly meetings with accessibility-focused organizations ensure Dallas’ facilities continue to be accessible for all users. These conversations allow staff to gather feedback from people with lived experience, identify barriers, and prioritize improvements. Regular meetings can also strengthen trust between the Town and residents with disabilities. Outreach could include: Gaston County Senior Center, Gaston County Adult & Aging Services, Meals on Wheels, The Arc of Gaston County, and local faith organizations. This ongoing collaboration will help guide investment and ensure that accessibility remains a core value for Dallas’ Parks & Recreation.



Volunteer avenues like “Adopt-A-Park” and “Friends” programs encourage stewardship of parks. Credit: Gaston County Parks & Recreation

Shade structures, like this one at Knight Family Community Park in Pittsboro, provide cool space for children and spectators. Credit: WithersRavenel



**Goal 2: Parks and recreation facilities address the unique needs of all Dallas' residents and visitors.**

Goal 2 addresses the infrastructural opportunities identified during the Planning process, including ADA accessibility and supportive amenities—like bathrooms and lighting—for a growing population of users.

**Objective 2.1: Enhance existing parks through construction of quality of life amenities.**

**Action 2.1.1: Construct permanent bathroom facilities in all Town Parks.**

Restroom facilities emerged as a top priority for the community across outdoor park spaces. Permanent, on-site bathrooms would improve park experience and usability. In terms of indoor facilities, bathrooms are available in Dennis Franklin Gym, but users described the bathrooms as being inaccessible for people with physical disabilities. The implementation plan accounts for bathroom construction costs by spacing out the anticipated development of a new bathroom facility every three years.

Options for providing on-site bathrooms range from portable units (low investment) to mobile bathroom trailers (moderate investment) and permanent restroom buildings (high investment). Prefabricated restroom units can offer a faster and cost-effective alternative to traditional masonry construction while still meeting ADA and health standards. To address these needs, the Town can phase improvements across parks, starting with Cloninger Park. New bathroom facilities should incorporate clear sight lines for safety, adequate lighting, and full ADA accessibility. At Carr School Fields, a shared-use agreement with Gaston Public Schools could help coordinate funding, construction, and maintenance of restrooms.

Regardless of the type of restroom, regular and consistent maintenance can improve user experience. Currently, maintenance activities are performed by Dallas Parks & Recreation staff, but additional funding for maintenance activities and improvements could be secured with help from the new Friends of Dallas Parks group (see [Action 1.3.1](#)).

**Action 2.1.2: Develop internal access in parks from parking lot to park facilities. Include seating, lighting, and garbage facilities as necessary for facility use.**

Community members emphasized the need for supportive facilities at parks to enhance user comfort and safety at Dallas' parks. Survey respondents noted insufficient sidewalks or ADA-compliant routes between parking areas and Carr School Fields and lighting at Cloninger Park and the Dallas Park soccer field to support recreational activities after sunset.

Feedback also revealed a desire for additional shade and bench seating throughout Dallas facilities. Shade structures could include constructed options (such as pavilions or shade sails) or natural options. Seating and shade provide children and families with a safe place to rest or spectate comfortably.

Conveniently located trash receptacles can reduce littering, decrease pest and wildlife issues, and improve public perception of a park. Through the public online survey, community members noted extra attention regarding trash pickup should be paid to Carr School Fields. The Town and school should verify that bins are located near the park entrance, around parking lots, and close to athletic fields.

**Action 2.1.3: Continue implementation of ADA Transition Plan, with prioritization of Dennis Franklin Gym access.**

Access to parks, gyms, and supportive facilities (e.g., restrooms) helps visitors stay safe and promotes a feeling of belonging for all users. To meet the needs of all residents and visitors, the Town should review its ADA Transition Plan, with special consideration of Dennis Franklin Gym. Respondents to the online survey frequently mentioned accessibility concerns at Dennis Franklin Gym, citing bathrooms and courtside steps as being dangerous or inaccessible to people with physical disabilities. One respondent to the online survey shared their experience as a wheelchair user, identifying the challenge that, "...people that are in wheelchairs have to sit on the basketball court-side to watch the games." To address these concerns, the Town should consider adding ramps to the gymnasium and ensure the bathrooms meet ADA requirements (door width and clearance, floor space and turning radius, and appliance specifications, etc.).

The Town's ADA Transition Plan identified additional areas for accessibility improvements in the Town's playgrounds. Per the Transition Plan, the playgrounds at Jagers Park, Cloninger Park, and Dennis Franklin Gym all lack appropriate accessibility features, including accessible entry points to the playground, handrails, and sufficient wheelchair access (turning space, ramps, etc.). It is recommended that Dallas Parks & Recreation use the ADA Transition Plan as a starting point to plan for accessibility upgrades in recreation facilities. The Town can pursue funding—through grant programs like the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) and the Accessible Parks Grant Program—to tackle design and construction of new or improved facilities.

**Objective 2.2: Improve Dallas connectivity and trail access.**

**Action 2.2.1: Establish neighborhood trail connections between Wooddale Drive and Jagers Park, and continue to build out the Little Long Creek Trail from Jersey Boulevard to NC-275 (Dallas Stanley Highway).**

Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity is a top priority for Dallas residents, with 77% of online survey respondents affirming they would be willing to support the Town's acquisition of land for a network of greenways, trails, and sidewalks. A shared-use path connecting Wooddale Drive and Jagers Park would provide residents along Robinson-Clemmer Road a safe and direct route to the neighborhood park. Adding this pathway would also help to bridge the divide created by the existing overhead powerlines, improving access between Robinson-Clemmer neighborhoods and the center of Dallas. Communities such as Pinellas County in Florida have designed trail systems by using utility easements, a strategy that Dallas could replicate in this scenario.

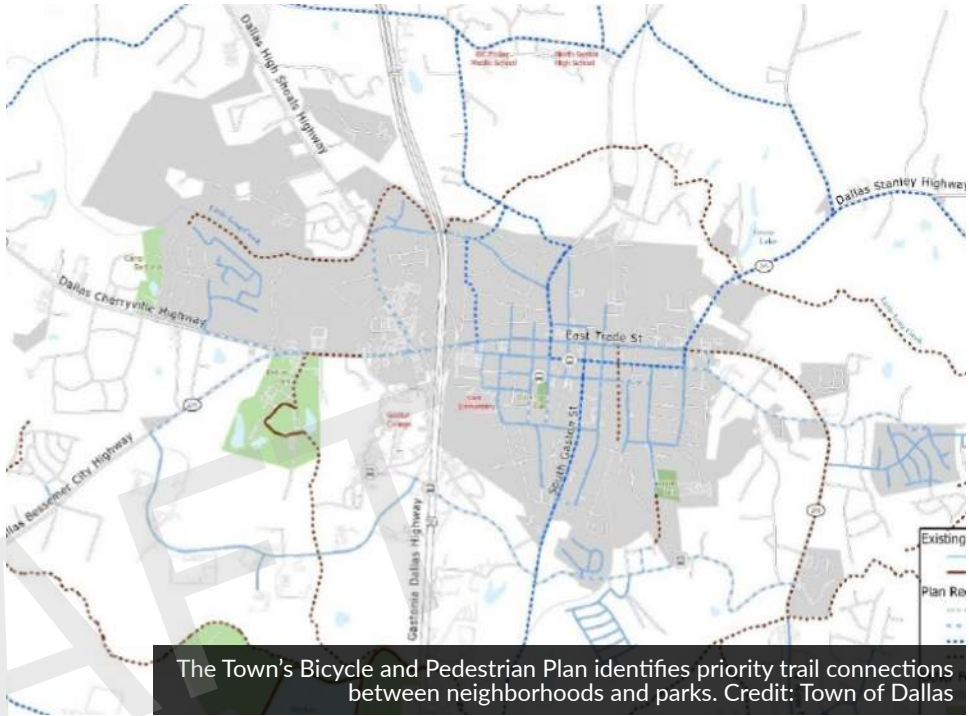
Additionally, a key recommendation in the Town of Dallas Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2022) was the expansion of Long Creek Trail. This east-west route, connecting neighborhoods north of Dallas center, could eventually serve as a spine for future north-south pedestrian connections, whether through shared-use paths or sidewalks. Proposed new sections of Long Creek Trail could be on land currently owned by the Town, within Town road right-of-way, or within a utility easement controlled by the Town.

*Case Study: The Duke Energy Trail is a 13-mile trail in Pinellas County Florida utilizing power line corridors for most of its route. The trail connects multiple trail systems including the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail, Ream Wilson Clearwater Trail, Weedon Island Trail, and Druid Road Trail. Users can access restrooms and water fountains at several community parks along the route. The trail is ADA compliant, with 12-to-15-foot wide asphalt.*

**Action 2.2.2: Implement the Town’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2022) to create trail connections between County-operated recreational spaces, including Dallas Park, Gaston College, and Rankin Lake.**

Both the Gaston County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2017) and the Town of Dallas Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2022) indicated local interest in developing a local network of trails that connect neighborhoods to regional recreational facilities. One of the main bike and pedestrian opportunities identified in the plans is a shared-use path linking Dallas Park and Gaston College, which could be developed within the right-of-way of Dallas Cherryville Highway. Another proposed trail links Dallas Park and Rankin Lake, which could be accomplished through the use of trail easements across private property.

*Example Project: Bike/Ped Connection between Dallas Park and Gaston College. Dallas Park and Gaston College could be connected by a shared-use path along Dallas Cherryville Highway. Though construction would be the responsibility of NCDOT, the Town of Dallas could working with NCDOT to coordinate designs and solicit public feedback. The shared-use path could be constructed within the right-of-way along the southern side of the highway. Funding strategies for the shared-use path could include the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), PeopleforBikes Community Grant Program, and the Carolina Thread Trail Regional Trail Implementation Grant.*



*The completion of the one-mile Highland Branch Greenway in April 2026 (see image on right) represents the most recent addition to the Carolina Thread Trail network. The greenway links Rankin Lake Park to downtown Gastonia, and presents an opportunity for a future pedestrian and bicycle connection between Rankin Lake Park and downtown Dallas.*



**Action 2.2.3: Coordinate with regional partners to link Dallas' existing bicycle and pedestrian network with the Carolina Thread Trail, positioning the Town as a key destination for regional tourism while also supporting residents who rely on the trail system for commuting.**

Both the Gaston County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2017) and the Town of Dallas Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2022) emphasize a strong regional interest in connecting local trails to the Carolina Thread Trail. Launched in 2007 as a private campaign led by the Catawba Lands Conservancy and the Foundation For The Carolinas, the Carolina Thread Trail has since expanded into a network connecting 15 counties and more than 80 communities across North Carolina.

Despite this regional extent, Dallas currently has no trail connections to the Carolina Thread Trail system. However, residents and stakeholders identified Dallas Park as a specific community destination that should be accessible by the Carolina Thread Trail, per the 2009 Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for Gaston County Communities. To position Dallas for future trail connectivity, the Town should continue to strengthen relationships with regional partners—particularly the Carolina Thread Trail, Catawba Lands Conservancy, and Gaston County Parks & Recreation—to stay informed about and engaged in future Carolina Thread Trail initiatives. This includes the latest effort to update all 15 participating counties' Master Plans, which will determine enhancements and expansions of the Carolina Thread Trail on a local scale.

**Objective 2.3: Expand recreational services for a growing population.**

**Action 2.3.1: Complete a feasibility study for a new recreation facility, considering spatial needs and anticipated staffing capacity.**

Community engagement revealed a need for additional recreation space to support a growing number of Parks & Recreation users. Development of a new facility represents a longer-term goal for the community. The Town should consider the necessary groundwork—identification of facility-specific needs, site assessment and selection (see [Action 4.1.3](#)), funding, and subsequent staffing—to establish a long-range schedule for planning and construction. This plan should also consider potential local and regional partnerships, for both facility planning and eventual operations.

**Action 2.3.2: Develop a pocket park on the existing Town-owned parcel adjacent to Courthouse Square to host community events.**

Public feedback through the online survey identified the parcel next to the courthouse as a desirable location for a pocket park. The quarter-acre Town-owned parcel (PIN # 3557-07-4021), located off North Holland Street and north of The Pickle restaurant, is currently vacant. After reviewing applicable regulations and codes (see [Action 4.1.1](#)), the Town should enlist the help of a design team to transform the parcel into an outdoor space capable of supporting community events and passive recreation. Amenities could include an amphitheater, a water feature, historic or cultural signage, bike parking, seating, and shade structures.

**Action 2.3.3: Identify opportunities for new amenities including a community garden, sensory playground, dog park, disc golf, and pickleball facilities as the town grows.**

A community garden, sensory playground, dog park, disc golf course, and pickleball courts were identified by the Dallas community as desirable new outdoor recreation features. The Town should first look at existing parks to determine whether additional programming could be feasible. In doing so, the Town should carefully evaluate geospatial needs to make sure new programmed space or uses does not compromise or remove existing facilities. If existing parks cannot support additional programming, the Town should evaluate other Town-owned parcels that may be suitable for these facilities (see [Action 4.3.1](#)). Some Town-owned land, like the parcel next to the Courthouse (see [Action 2.3.2](#)), could be developed into neighborhood or pocket parks.

**Action 2.3.4: Select a design team to generate conceptual designs for a new recreation facility.**

After a suitable site has been identified (see [Action 4.1.3](#)) and a high-level feasibility study has been completed (see [Action 2.3.1](#)), the Town should hire a design team to create conceptual designs for the new recreation facility. The team should engage the community throughout the process to ensure the new facility will adequately address the Town's recreational needs. During the creation of this plan, the Dallas community expressed a desire for basketball courts and flex space for low-impact fitness classes or special events. At a minimum, the new facility must comply with ADA standards, but incorporating additional universal design elements can further promote inclusivity for people of all ages and abilities. The resulting conceptual designs can be used by the Town in grant applications to fund pre-construction and construction activities.



Pocket parks, like this Centennial Park in Bessemer City, maximizes use of small spaces for events like concerts. Credit: VisitBessemer.com

Programs like youth baseball provide opportunities for Dallas residents and visitors to learn, get active, and have fun together. Credit: Town of Dallas



**Goal 3: Programs are accessible, well-designed, and community-driven.**

Goal 3 emphasizes recreational programming that improves park awareness, meets age-specific recreational needs, and fosters community pride through local events.

**Objective 3.1: Promote use of existing facilities & partnerships.****Action 3.1.1: Host events at Jagers park to boost recognition of park offerings and facilities.**

Hosting events and programs at Jagers Park will help residents become familiar with the amenities it provides. In response to a public online survey question asking respondents to consider how frequently they visit Dallas' parks, 74% of respondents indicated they either visit the park once per year or not at all. With its basketball courts, playground, and softball field, Jagers provides ample space for weekly organized sport leagues, which the community identified as an opportunity to address a gap in young adult programming. Weekly basketball leagues can provide an avenue for Dallas' young adults to socialize and recreate.

The Town could also partner with local sports businesses to host summer clinics or camps at Jagers Park. Additionally, the Town could use Jagers Park's fields and courts to host single-day events like community field days, outdoor movie nights, or charity softball events—events that, over time, can position Jagers Park as a primary gathering space in Dallas. That said, these additional programs and events will only be possible when staff capacity expands (see [Action 1.1.1](#) and [Action 1.1.1](#)) or if programs are supported by volunteers or third-party providers (such as local fitness- or health-focused businesses).

**Action 3.1.2: As programming expands, leverage the Dallas Civic Center for fitness-based programming, including chair yoga, Pilates, etc.**

The Dallas Civic Center offers indoor space that is currently rented out for Pilates, yoga, and special events. Feedback from the public online survey and the senior focus group emphasized a desire for more frequent activities. The Parks & Recreation Department should explore a weekly schedule of low-impact programming and wellness programs (such as yoga and Zumba) to address the needs of older adults and help balance user demand across Dallas' facilities. Ultimately, the Civic Center represents additional, programmable space that can generate revenue for the Parks & Recreation Department, as long as staffing can adequately support regular fitness programs.

**Action 3.1.3: Coordinate with Gaston County Parks & Recreation to identify opportunities to host events in Dallas Park when Town facilities are at capacity.**

Partnering with Gaston County Parks & Recreation Department can help Dallas Parks & Recreation continue to offer programs and events, during when local facilities are at capacity. Coordination, for facilities like Dallas Park, can allow the County and the Town to share space and better better serve Dallas residents and visitors to the region.

**Objective 3.2: Expand programming to serve the Town's unique users.****Action 3.2.1: As staff are onboarded, develop a program philosophy and program metrics to ensure Town opportunities are used and enjoyed.**

An inspiring program philosophy can motivate staff and build a shared sense of purpose and direction. The philosophy can support consistency and quality, providing staff and volunteers with a set of expectations for program outcomes, community engagement, and visitor support. A program philosophy can also provide a clear framework for decision-making, whether related to budgets, staffing, or program expansion or discontinuation.

To track trends and ensure resources are being used effectively to serve residents and visitors, Dallas Parks & Recreation can generate a list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and review them on an annual basis. Example KPIs include number of visitor safety/incident reports, visitor satisfaction scores, budget adherence, and total revenue. Data to inform the KPIs can be collected through public surveys and internal reporting (e.g., annual budgets, staffing reports). KPIs should be reviewed and updated annually so staff can understand department strengths and opportunities. Many KPIs will also be readily available through the Town's RecDesk system of program management, or otherwise compatible with similar software, making the tracking of metrics streamlined and consistent.

These KPIs can also help the department develop a fee policy with clear cost recovery goals. This policy should identify what percentage of program or facility costs should be covered through fees relative to the cost of the program and anticipated community benefit. For example, specialty or private classes that benefit small groups should be expected to generate enough revenue to cover the cost of hosting the program (close to 100% cost recovery) while access to parks or community events that benefit the public should remain free (0% cost recovery). Having cost recovery targets based on the type of program or service can help Dallas Parks & Recreation ensure its programs are fiscally sustainable and that the fee framework is data-driven and justifiable.

**Action 3.2.2: Develop a program suite that specifically serves Senior Citizens and Young Adults while continuing to primarily support Youth Programming.**

Youth programs were described by the community as being strong and in-demand, with a growing number of kids participating in organized sports programs like baseball, basketball, and soccer. However, input from the online survey and open houses suggested lower participation among seniors and young adults, indicating a need a greater number and range of adult programming. In a focus group geared toward senior needs, participants endorsed diversified adult programming including adult yoga, indoor walking, and general fitness classes. The young adult focus group highlighted a desire for organized adult sports leagues, fun runs (usually a 1-mile walk, 5k run, and 10k run), and social events (i.e., outdoor movies, fire pit nights) at park facilities. In addition to Cloninger Park, Jagers Park, and Carr School Park, the proposed courthouse square pocket park (see [Action 2.3.2](#)) could host these events in the heart of Dallas.

**Action 3.2.3: Engage in regional partnerships to support and raise awareness for diversified programming, including Special Needs, Teen, and Outdoor Recreation opportunities.**

Dallas Parks & Recreation provides recreation facilities and services that support residents and visitors, but it can utilize other players in the regional network who align with their goals of having active, involved residents. By facilitating and promoting the efforts of other organizations, the Town can address current gaps in recreational programming. Opportunities for collaboration and promotion include:

- » Gaston Aquatics Center, once its new facility opens, will host a competition Olympic-size pool, multi-purpose/meeting rooms, weight room, massage room, and cross training spaces. It will also provide Gaston County residents access to the region's first zero-degree entry pool, supporting adult and youth swim lessons, medical rehabilitation, and safety training programs.
- » Comserv, Inc. provides services and support for people with disabilities and their families. Comserv, Inc. has an established relationship with Gaston County, and provides Adult Day Activity programs (focused on job/ daily living/independence skills) at Creative Opportunities in Gastonia.

- » Disability Rights & Resources, based in Charlotte, provides supportive services for people with disabilities. Services include peer mentoring, independent living skills, transportation, advocacy, audio description, and emergency preparedness resources.
- » Gaston County Parks & Recreation’s Greater Gaston Senior Games offers a range of recreational activities for residents 50 and older. Activities include badminton, billiards, bocce, cornhole, horseshoes, shuffleboard, swimming, and more.
- » Gaston County Family YMCA’s Teen Programming hub provides physical wellness classes, skill-building workshops, mental health services, and a leadership group.
- » Gastonia’s Erwin Center & Park offers youth and adult athletics, summer camps, youth cooking classes, youth and teen leadership clubs, and babysitting classes, among others.

Expanding awareness of these resources through social media outreach or a new “Regional Recreational Resources” webpage on the Town’s website can be a cost-effective way for Dallas Parks & Recreation to supplement its current offerings.

**Objective 3.3: Host annual events that celebrate Dallas.**

**Action 3.3.1: As staff are onboarded, consider annual, Town-wide events that can be developed and run by Dallas Parks & Recreation.**

With the addition of new staff, Dallas Parks & Recreation can organize additional annual events that reflect Dallas’ identity and community priorities. Establishing recurring Town wide events—such as festivals, fun runs, and seasonal gatherings—can help build tradition and strengthen community pride. Public input highlighted family-friendly events and summer events as top preferences for the community, with examples including music events, face painting, and food truck days. These types of events can draw new users to recreation facilities and build a sense of community. Increased visibility often leads to higher overall park use and stronger support for future improvements. Additionally, staff can support and facilitate smaller volunteer-driven events such as daddy-daughter dances, board game nights, and craft fairs. These kinds of events can be cost- and time-effective ways to engage the community in family-friendly activities.

**Action 3.3.2: Work with Planning staff and the Board of Aldermen to ensure that events support local businesses and food trucks to maximize event revenues.**

Dallas’ Planning staff and Board of Aldermen can help ensure that Town events intentionally support and showcase Dallas’ small businesses, artists, and food vendors. By coordinating policies, permitting, and event logistics, the Town can create opportunities for local businesses to participate or sponsor events. A strong business presence at events can enhance the experience for attendees, diversify offerings, and generate additional revenue. This action both strengthens the Town’s relationship with the business community and supports the local economy.



Annual events, like the annual Concert and Cruise-In bolster awareness of Town facilities and attract tourists. Credit: Gaston County Parks & Recreation

Private developers can contribute to the public realm through designing appealing passive recreation spaces. Credit: WithersRavenel



**Goal 4: All Dallas residents and visitors have access to small scale parks and privately-developed recreational spaces.**

Goal 4 focuses on evaluating and updating local policies to align with community priorities, particularly the interest in expanding opportunities for small-scale parks and recreational spaces developed by private landowners.

**Objective 4.1: Evaluate Town-owned properties for recreation potential.**

**Action 4.1.1: Ensure that the parcel adjoining Courthouse Square is usable as a pocket park.**

The Town should review its development codes to verify the viability of a pocket park adjacent to Courthouse Square. Community engagement revealed this to be a desirable location for programmed green space, which could include canopy trees, benches, informational signage, or cultural markers. It is recommended that the Town, potentially with the support of a consultant, investigate transforming this space into a space for passive recreation and socializing through creative, people-oriented design (see [Action Item 2.3.2](#)).

**Action 4.1.2: Continue evaluating use of Dallas Civic Center for programming and ensure that the proper rental fee/user fees are established.**

The Dallas Civic Center currently hosts special events (e.g., family parties and sports banquets) and low-impact recreational classes. The Town should review the past event schedule of Dallas Civic Center and identify opportunities for additional weekly or monthly events identified as desirable by the Town (see [Action 3.1.2](#)).

However, as programming increases in the facility, the Town should review of program/rental fees and schedule fee increases in a sustainable manner—one that provides the Town with revenue reasonable with demand, but that is not cost prohibitive for event organizers or attendees.

Comparison of Facility Rentals between Dallas, Lowell, and Bessemer City:

- » The Dallas Civic Center building has a meeting room, kitchenette, restroom, tables, and chairs. The space has a maximum occupancy of 100 people. Current rental rates for the Civic Center are \$200 per day for Town residents and \$300 per day for non-residents. A \$100 refundable deposit is charged regardless of residency status.
- » The Lowell Parks and Recreation Department rents out the Lowell Community Center, a building with a maximum capacity of 50 people. The building, which has two small meeting rooms, a kitchen, bathrooms, tables, and chairs, is available for \$30/hour for four hours (minimum) for Lowell residents and \$45/hour for four hours (minimum) for non-residents. The Department charges a \$100 refundable deposit regardless of residency status.
- » Bessemer City rents out the Allan Farris Community Center, a building with one large meeting/banquet room and a kitchenette. Maximum capacity is 150 people (if seated) or 100 (if seated with tables). Bessemer City residents can rent the space for \$750 for eight hours. The rate for non-city residents is \$1000 for eight hours. Bessemer City requires a \$250 refundable deposit regardless of residency status plus \$100 for general liability insurance.

**Action 4.1.3: Identify parcels that would support the future development of a Recreation Facility.**

Parallel with the feasibility study described in **Action 2.3.1**, the Town should identify parcels (preferably Town-owned) that could support a new building and outdoor recreation amenities. When reviewing suitable parcels, the Town should consider proximity to schools and residential neighborhoods; convenience of access by car, walking, or cycling; sufficient acreage for the facility with appropriate parking and outdoor amenities; room for potential future expansions; and availability of utilities like water, sewer, and electric. Once suitable parcels are identified, the Town can engage a design team to assess site-specific opportunities or challenges through a feasibility study (see **Action 2.3.4**).

**Objective 4.2: Incentivize private development of parks and public spaces.**

**Action 4.2.1: Work with Planning Staff to ensure that Open Space regulations and development incentives in the Town's UDO support robust, developer-driven recreation development.**

At the time of this report, the Town was working with a consultant to update its ordinances. As part of the process, the Planning Department clarified requirements associated with open space preservation, fee-in-lieu, and maintenance responsibility.

The new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) contains updated lot standards requiring a minimum percentage of lot area to be preserved as open space, varying between 10 percent (for residential or nonresidential development) and 50 percent (for conservation subdivisions). A new section, Section 6.8 Open Space Set-Aside and Parkland, sets design standards for open space set-asides; defines situations requiring passive space, gathering space, or active space; and identifies permitted features and amenities.

In the first couple years after the revised UDO has been adopted, the Town's Planning Department should communicate with Dallas Parks & Recreation to assess whether open spaces are being developed and maintained in accordance with the UDO's requirements and in a manner that is effective for the Town. In the future, the Town could consider amending the UDO to contain additional open space regulations or incentives, such as density bonuses, to encourage development of public spaces like plazas, pocket parks, or playgrounds.

**Action 4.2.2: Codify trail easements in the UDO, where applicable (from Dallas Comp LUP).**

A trail easement allows a landowner to permit public use of a trail across their property while retaining full ownership and without having to subdivide the land. Using easements, the Town can help close trail gaps on private property, providing a safe, accessible, interconnected network for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Town should consider adding ordinance language specifying where trail easements may be used to ensure future development does not impede future greenway or trail development.

*Case Study: Rolesville's Land Development Ordinance (LDO) identifies greenways as important "recreational and transportation corridors," requiring developers to observe development standards where land is designated as part of the Town's adopted greenway system. These development standards dictate greenway design, accessibility, maintenance, trail connectivity, and amenities (requiring three of the following: drinking fountains, restrooms, trash receptacles, benches, bicycle racks, and shade structures).*

### Objective 4.3: Strategically acquire and grow the Dallas Parks/trails network.

#### Action 4.3.1: Continue to evaluate Town-owned parcels for future parkland development.

As Dallas' current parkland reaches programmable capacity, the Town should evaluate Town-owned parcels that could support future park development. According to assessor's data, the Town currently owns forty-three (43) parcels, many of which host municipal buildings, public parking lots, parks, or utilities. However, lots with public buildings may be suitable for pocket parks or passive recreation features like benches. Vacant parcels should be evaluated for larger programmed space such as neighborhood parks, greenways, or trails. Dallas should consider amenities identified as desirable by the community (see [Action 2.3.3](#)) when considering Town-owned land for future park development.

#### Action 4.3.2: Develop a Parkland Acquisition Policy to support continual land acquisition and growth based on population metrics.

Once current Town-owned land reaches capacity for parks and recreation facilities, Dallas should begin acquiring land for new park space. Anticipated recreational demand should guide decisions in future land acquisition, so the Town can provide ample recreation space as the population grows. To ensure future land acquisition is strategic, the Town should first identify an achievable metric, such as a population-to-parkland ratio, to evaluate current and future needs. Second, the Town should develop a strategy for identifying sites suitable for parks or recreation amenities, considering factors like environmental constraints (such as wetlands or grading), zoning, and roadway access.



Future parkland acquisition can allow the Town offer additional amenities, such as a nature playground like this one at Rosedale Park in Huntersville, NC. Credit: Yelp

## Implementation Playbook

The Implementation Playbook combines Goals, Objectives, and Action Items so staff can easily identify responsible parties and time frames for each. The Implementation Playbook is expected to change over the course of implementation. It is recommended that Dallas' Parks and Recreation staff, with the support of partners or community leaders, review and update this Playbook to reflect efforts to date.

The action matrix (see opposite page) identifies the following information for each action item:

- » Champion – The municipal department that holds the primary responsibility for implementing the associated Action Item. It is anticipated that many of these recommendations will require collaboration between departments or with organizations outside of Dallas. It is the responsibility of the indicated Champion to organize those collaborative efforts.
- » Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) – The approximate financial cost of the associated action item, defined as “\$” (generally staff time using money from general fund), “\$\$” (small- to medium-scale planning or infrastructure project requiring partnership, fundraising, or grants), and “\$\$\$” (large-scale capital investment potentially requiring state or federal funding).

This Playbook also includes a timeline (see pages 100 and 101) indicating the anticipated start date of each Action Item or if it is an ongoing action that should be revisited annually. Please **Appendix C** for a Fillable Timeline.

<i>Index</i>	<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Champion</i>	<i>ROM</i>
1.1.1	Hire one staff member for support	Parks & Rec	\$\$
1.1.2	Continue evaluation of staff capacity and growth needs	Parks & Rec	\$
1.1.3	Establish quarterly meetings with Gaston County Parks & Recreation	Parks & Rec	\$
1.1.4	Evaluate maintenance equipment needs, specifically for replacement mower	Parks & Rec	\$
1.2.1	Implement a digital marketing strategy for parks, programs, and events	Parks & Rec	\$
1.2.2	Create an annual program and event flyer for marketing	Parks & Rec	\$
1.3.1	Establish the “Friends of Dallas Parks” association to support staff and fundraising	Parks & Rec	\$
1.3.2	Establish an “Adopt-A-Park” program to support staff with park maintenance	Parks & Rec	\$
1.3.3	Establish recurring meetings with accessibility-focused advocacy groups	Parks & Rec	\$

<b>Index</b>	<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Champion</b>	<b>ROM</b>
2.1.1	Construct permanent bathroom in Town park	Parks & Rec	\$\$
2.1.2	Develop internal access, lighting, seating, and waste amenities in Town parks	Parks & Rec	\$\$
2.1.3	Continue implementation of Town's ADA Transition Plan	Town Administration	\$\$/\$\$\$
2.2.1	Establish trail connections to Jagers Park and expand connections along Little Long Creek Trail	Parks & Rec	\$\$\$
2.2.2	Continue implementation of the Town's Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan (2022)	Town Administration	\$\$
2.2.3	Coordinate with regional partners to link Dallas trail network to regional amenities at the Carolina Thread Trail	Parks & Rec	\$\$
2.3.1	Complete a feasibility study for a new recreation facility	Town Administration	\$\$
2.3.2	Develop a pocket park in Courthouse Square for community events	Town Administration	\$\$\$
2.3.3	Identify opportunities for new amenities including a community garden, sensory playground, dog park, disc golf, and pickleball as the town grows	Parks & Rec	\$
2.3.4	Select design team for conceptual design of recreation center	Town Administration	\$\$
3.1.1	Host event in Jagers Park to boost community awareness	Parks & Rec	\$
3.1.2	Utilize Dallas Civic Center for fitness-based program offerings	Parks & Rec	\$
3.1.3	Coordinate with Gaston County to use Dallas Park facilities when the Town's facilities are at capacity	Parks & Rec	\$
3.2.1	Develop a program philosophy and tracking metrics for program performance	Parks & Rec	\$
3.2.2	Expand the Town's programs to strategically serve seniors and young adults	Parks & Rec	\$
3.2.3	Partner regionally to raise awareness for diversified programming including special needs and outdoor recreation opportunities	Parks & Rec	\$
3.3.1	Evaluate opportunities for Town-wide annual events to be hosted by the Town	Parks & Rec	\$
3.3.2	Work with Town leadership to ensure that Town events host local businesses and food trucks	Parks & Rec	\$
4.1.1	Confirm Town parcel adjoining Courthouse Square is suitable for a park	Parks & Rec	\$
4.1.2	Continue evaluation of Dallas Civic Center for programming and ensure proper rental/user fee is established	Parks & Rec	\$
4.1.3	Identify parcels that would support a future recreation facility	Parks & Rec	\$
4.2.1	Work with Planning staff to ensure Town codes support developer-driven recreation facilities	Planning & Zoning	\$
4.2.2	Codify trail easements into the Town codes where applicable	Planning & Zoning	\$
4.3.1	Evaluate Town-owned parcels for parkland potential	Parks & Rec	\$
4.3.2	Develop a parkland acquisition policy to support continual land acquisition and growth	Parks & Rec	\$

YEAR 1      YEAR 2      YEAR 3      YEAR 4      YEAR 5

**OPERATIONS**

- 1.1.1: Hire One Staff Member for Support
- 1.1.3: Establish Quarterly Meetings with Gaston County Parks & Recreation

- 1.2.1: Implement a Digital Marketing Strategy for Parks, Programs, and Events
- 1.3.1: Establish the "Friends of Dallas Parks" Association to Support Staff & Fundraising

- 1.2.2: Create an Annual Program & Event Flyer for Marketing
- 1.3.3: Establish Recurring Meetings with Accessibility-Focused Advocacy Groups

- 1.3.2: Establish an "Adopt-A-Park" Program to Support Staff with Park Maintenance
- 1.1.2a: Continue Evaluation of Staff Capacity and Growth Needs

- 1.1.4a: Evaluate Maintenance Equipment Needs, Specifically for Replacement Mower

**FACILITIES**

- 2.3.1: Complete a Feasibility Study for a New Recreation Facility

- 2.1.2a: Develop Internal Access, Lighting, Seating, and Waste Amenities in Town Parks
- 2.3.2: Develop a Pocket Park in Courthouse Square for Community Events

- 2.1.1a: Construct Permanent Bathroom in Town Park

- 2.2.1: Establish Trail Connections to Jagers Park and Expand Connections Along Little Long Creek Trail

**PROGRAMS**

- 3.1.1: Host Event in Jagers Park to Boost Community Awareness
- 3.2.1: Develop a Program Philosophy and Tracking Metrics for Program Performance

- 3.1.2: Utilize Dallas Civic Center for Fitness-Based Program Offerings
- 3.3.1: Evaluate Opportunities for Town-Wide Annual Events to be Hosted by the Town

- 3.2.2: Expand the Town's Programs to Strategically Serve Seniors & Young Adults

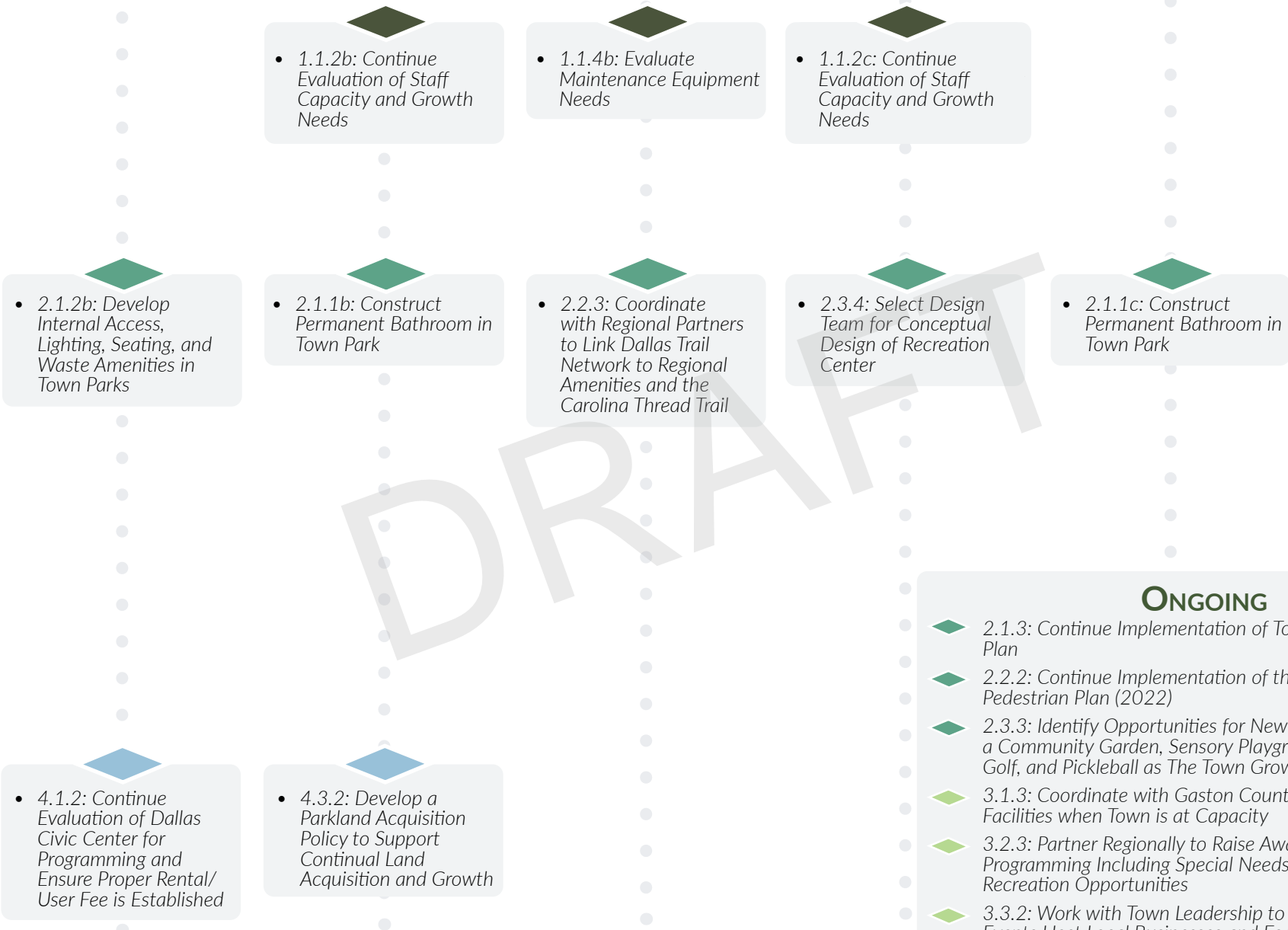
**POLICY**

- 4.1.1: Confirm Town Parcel Adjoining Courthouse Square is Suitable for Park
- 4.2.1: Work with Planning Staff to Ensure Town Codes Support Developer-Driven Recreation Facilities

- 4.1.3: Identify Parcels that Would Support a Future Recreation Facility

- 4.2.2: Codify Trail Easements into the Towns Codes where Applicable

YEAR 6      YEAR 7      YEAR 8      YEAR 9      YEAR 10



- 1.1.2b: Continue Evaluation of Staff Capacity and Growth Needs

- 1.1.4b: Evaluate Maintenance Equipment Needs

- 1.1.2c: Continue Evaluation of Staff Capacity and Growth Needs

- 2.1.2b: Develop Internal Access, Lighting, Seating, and Waste Amenities in Town Parks

- 2.1.1b: Construct Permanent Bathroom in Town Park

- 2.2.3: Coordinate with Regional Partners to Link Dallas Trail Network to Regional Amenities and the Carolina Thread Trail

- 2.3.4: Select Design Team for Conceptual Design of Recreation Center

- 2.1.1c: Construct Permanent Bathroom in Town Park

- 4.1.2: Continue Evaluation of Dallas Civic Center for Programming and Ensure Proper Rental/ User Fee is Established

- 4.3.2: Develop a Parkland Acquisition Policy to Support Continual Land Acquisition and Growth

- ONGOING**
- ◆ 2.1.3: Continue Implementation of Town's ADA Transition Plan
  - ◆ 2.2.2: Continue Implementation of the Town's Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan (2022)
  - ◆ 2.3.3: Identify Opportunities for New Amenities Including a Community Garden, Sensory Playground, Dog Park, Disc Golf, and Pickleball as The Town Grows
  - ◆ 3.1.3: Coordinate with Gaston County to Use Dallas Park Facilities when Town is at Capacity
  - ◆ 3.2.3: Partner Regionally to Raise Awareness for Diversified Programming Including Special Needs and Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
  - ◆ 3.3.2: Work with Town Leadership to Ensure that Town Events Host Local Businesses and Food Trucks
  - ◆ 4.3.1: Evaluate Town-Owned Parcels for Parkland Potential

## Growth Opportunities Through Community Support

The most significant opportunity for Dallas Parks & Recreation lies in the depth of its community support. Throughout the development of this Parks & Recreation Master Plan, residents consistently expressed a strong sense of pride and attachment to their local parks and recreation programs. The public online survey and open houses revealed an eagerness to improve and expand the Dallas Parks & Recreation system.

This support extends across multiple segments of the community. Town residents voiced a willingness to volunteer their time for park cleanups and special events, or make monetary donations to support ongoing stewardship efforts. Local businesses and organizations continue to actively participate in events, and conversations with Town staff underscored recent successes in engaging downtown restaurants and food trucks for the new Movies in the Park program.

Dallas Parks & Recreation can lean on this collective pride and eagerness to support the parks system by continuing to engage corporate sponsors and highlighting short-term needs that could be fulfilled by donations. Recently, sponsorships funded the donation of two new scoreboards for the Carr School Fields, and a local electric company volunteered to install them at no cost. This kind of donation has immediate benefits for Dallas Parks & Recreation—who may otherwise have to pursue grant funding for such purchases—and the public, who get to enjoy an enhanced sports experience.



Private development of parks and recreation facilities can be encouraged or required through the Town's ordinances. Credit: WithersRavenel

## Funding Opportunities

The following section identifies possible funding opportunities that the Town can pursue to invest in park enhancements or development of new programs or facilities. To best position for funding, the Town should consider partnering with non-profits, the County, or neighboring municipalities, depending on the project or program.

### Federal Funding Programs

Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Website	<a href="https://www.railstotrails.org/policy/funding/atip/">https://www.railstotrails.org/policy/funding/atip/</a>
Description	Support organizations and local governments that are implementing projects to build and improve multi-use trails. Fill gaps in all types of active transportation infrastructure, including sidewalks, crosswalks, multiuse trails and greenways and separated or painted bike lanes.
Project Examples	Trails and greenways; Bike lanes
Max Award Amount	Varies
Match Required	20% (higher match increases score)
Application Deadline	June
Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Website	<a href="https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities">https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities</a>
Description	BRIC provides funding for hazard mitigation measures that can include nature-based solutions (e.g., flood-plain parks, greenways as stormwater buffers) that also provide recreation benefits.
Project Examples	Floodable parks; Riparian greenways; Culvert upsizing with trail co-benefits; Resilient access points
Max Award Amount	Varies (see NOFO); applicable to large-scale or regional projects
Match Required	25%
Application Deadline	July

<b>Clean Water State Revolving Fund</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	US Environmental Protection Agency
Website	<a href="https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-infrastructure/i-need-funding/clean-water-state-revolving-fund">https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-infrastructure/i-need-funding/clean-water-state-revolving-fund</a>
Description	The Clean Water State Revolving Fund provides funds for restoration of first-order streams including stormwater infiltration Storm-water Control Measures (SCMs), establishment of restoration of permanent riparian buffers to at least 30 ft on both sides of a stream, restoration of stream/wetland/buffer, reclaimed wa-ter/usage or rainwater harvesting/usage, and projects that provide SCMs to treat existing sources of pollution.
Project Examples	Stormwater Best Management Practices; Stream/wetland/riparian buffer restoration; Rainwater harvest-ing/usage
Max Award Amount	Loans up to \$35,000,000 (0% interest, 20 year)
Match Required	No match requirement, 2% loan fee
Application Deadline	Two funding cycles per year, typically in March and September

<b>Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	NC Rural Economic Development Division (REDD)
Website	<a href="https://www.hud.gov/hud-partners/community-cdbg">https://www.hud.gov/hud-partners/community-cdbg</a>
Description	Provides formula-based grants to provide housing, suitable living environments, and expanding economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons.
Project Examples	Acquisition of real property; Construction of parks and public facilities including community centers and parks
Max Award Amount	Varies (see NOFO); funds not consistently available
Match Required	50%
Application Deadline	Varies depending on program and funding availability

<b>Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	US Department of Agriculture
Website	<a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program">https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program</a>
Description	Program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial, or business undertakings.
Project Examples	Street improvements; Public works vehicles or equipment; Construction of community gardens and food hubs; Construction of community centers
Max Award Amount	Varies (Low interest direct loans with repayment terms up to 40 years, based on facility useful life. Limited grants available based on MHI)
Match Required	None
Application Deadline	Rolling

<b>Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP)</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	USDA Forest Service
Website	<a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program">https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program</a>
Description	The Community Forest Program helps communities acquire and protect forests that offer public recreation, safeguard water and wildlife resources, demonstrate sustainable forest management, and support local economies through forest based products.
Project Examples	Community outreach; Land acquisition
Max Award Amount	\$600,000
Match Required	50%
Application Deadline	January

<b>Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) Implementation Grants</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	US Economic Development Administration (EDA)
Website	<a href="https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/economic-adjustment-assistance">https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/economic-adjustment-assistance</a>
Description	EAA Implementation Grants support development in economically distressed areas of the United States by fostering job creation and attracting private investment.
Project Examples	Water/sewer/road/broadband to trailheads or gateway parks; Tourism infrastructure enabling new private investment; Development and implementation of long-term disaster recovery and resiliency plans; Enhancement of infrastructure to make it more resilient to natural disasters
Max Award Amount	Varies (see NOFO)
Match Required	Varies (based on economic indicators of applicant)
Application Deadline	Rolling

<b>Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
Website	<a href="https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/land-and-water-conservation-fund">https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/land-and-water-conservation-fund</a>
Description	The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides matching grants to local governments to assist with public park and recreation projects.
Project Examples	Land acquisition for public parks; Outdoor recreation facility rehabilitation or development
Max Award Amount	\$750,000
Match Required	50%
Application Deadline	Early November

<b>Recreational Trails Program (RTP)</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	North Carolina Trails Committee
Website	<a href="https://trails.nc.gov/trail-grants/apply-grant">https://trails.nc.gov/trail-grants/apply-grant</a>
Description	Grants help fund sustainable construction ready projects that meet recreational trail needs to provide low infrastructure economic development opportunities through natural resource tourism.
Project Examples	Construction of new trails; Maintenance or repair of existing trails; Land acquisition; Planning, legal and permitting; Purchase of trail tools
Max Award Amount	\$100,000
Match Required	25%
Application Deadline	September

<b>Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	National Park Service (NPS)
Website	<a href="https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities">https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/learn/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities</a>
Description	Through RTCA, NPS staff help local partners plan trails, greenways, river access, and park projects, including community engagement and funding strategies.
Project Examples	Trail/greenway concept plans; River access master plans; Park rehabilitation; Construction of new parks; Community engagement (through in-person events or digital media); Improvements to underutilized spaces (repurposing vacant or abandoned lands as parks, gardens, open space); Programs for mental and physical well-being; Heritage/cultural signs
Max Award Amount	Technical assistance only
Match Required	N/A
Application Deadline	July

<b>RTP Safety and Education Grant (SEG)</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	North Carolina Trails Committee
Website	<a href="https://trails.nc.gov/trail-grants/apply-grant#safety-education-grant">https://trails.nc.gov/trail-grants/apply-grant#safety-education-grant</a>
Description	Supports projects that promote trail safety, environmental protection, and public education for trail users.
Project Examples	Safety and education instructor fees; Speaker fees ; Displays, signage, and educational materials (print, video, interactive displays); Trail patrols for safety monitoring, environmental protection; Training programs on trail safety, environmental stewardship, accessibility, and sustainability
Max Award Amount	\$5,000 (reimbursement model)
Match Required	25%
Application Deadline	Biannual (April and September)

<b>Water Resources Development Grant Program</b>	
Funding Source	Federal
Administering Agency	NC Department of Environmental Quality - Division of Water Infrastructure
Website	<a href="https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-grants/water-resources-development-grant-program">https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-grants/water-resources-development-grant-program</a>
Description	The purpose of this program is to provide cost-share grants and technical assistance to local governments for seven eligible project types.
Project Examples	Stream restoration; Stormwater control measures; Flood reduction/resilience; Water-based recreation sites (greenways, trails, boardwalks, fishing docks/piers, paddle access); Land acquisition for water-based recreation sites; Preliminary feasibility or engineering studies related to water-based recreation
Max Award Amount	\$200,000 (larger grants may be awarded on a case-by-case basis)
Match Required	50%
Application Deadline	June

**State Funding Programs**

<b>Connecting Communities to State Trails Grants (CCST)</b>	
Funding Source	State
Administering Agency	Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
Website	<a href="https://trails.nc.gov/state-trails/nc-complete-trails-program">https://trails.nc.gov/state-trails/nc-complete-trails-program</a>
Description	State program to help small municipalities (population <25,000) connect to authorized State Trails; includes planning and construction for connections.
Project Examples	Trail development; Land acquisition
Max Award Amount	Varies
Match Required	Varies by population: ≤5,000 no match; 5k-<25k 50% match
Application Deadline	October

<b>Multimodal Planning Grant Program</b>	
Funding Source	State
Administering Agency	NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division
Website	<a href="https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/IMD-Multimodal-Planning-Program/Pages/default.aspx">https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/IMD-Multimodal-Planning-Program/Pages/default.aspx</a>
Description	Supports the development of local (Town or County-wide) comprehensive bicycle plans and pedestrian plans. As required by this program, these plans may not be included in a comprehensive plan.
Project Examples	Comprehensive Bicycle Plan; Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan
Max Award Amount	Varies
Match Required	Sliding scale based on population
Application Deadline	April or May

<b>NC Land and Water Fund (NCLWF)</b>	
Funding Source	State
Administering Agency	NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
Website	<a href="https://nclwf.nc.gov/">https://nclwf.nc.gov/</a>
Description	The Land and Water Fund improves water quality, sustains ecological diversity, and protects historic sites and military installations by funding projects to acquire land, restore the habitat for fish, wildlife, and other species, and enhance the filtering of stormwater runoff to reduce pollutants from entering water supplies.
Project Examples	Land acquisition for conservation; Riparian buffer rehabilitation; Water restoration projects to enhance or restore waterways and to protect downstream natural resources such as drinking water supplies, fisheries, and recreation opportunities
Max Award Amount	No set funding range.
Match Required	None. However, the percentage of match and the type of match is factored in the application rating system
Application Deadline	Early March

<b>Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)</b>	
Funding Source	State
Administering Agency	NC Division of Parks and Recreation
Website	<a href="https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/parks-and-recreation-trust-fund">https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/parks-and-recreation-trust-fund</a>
Description	The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) provides matching grants to local governments to assist with public park and recreation projects.
Project Examples	Land acquisition for public parks; Outdoor recreation facility rehabilitation or development
Max Award Amount	\$500,000
Match Required	50%
Application Deadline	Early May

**Regional Funding Programs**

<b>Economic Development Districts / Regional Councils of Government</b>	
Funding Source	Regional
Administering Agency	NCARCOG
Website	<a href="https://ncarcog.org/services/">https://ncarcog.org/services/</a>
Description	EDDs/COGs (e.g., Southwestern Commission) provide planning, grant development, CEDS alignment, and access to EDA programs that can fund recreation-linked infrastructure for tourism/outdoor economy.
Project Examples	Trailheads; Water/sewer/road to outdoor recreation sites; Wayfinding; Business support facilities that enable outdoor economy projects
Max Award Amount	Technical assistance only
Match Required	N/A
Application Deadline	N/A

**Private Funding Programs**

<b>AARP Community Challenge</b>	
Funding Source	Private
Administering Agency	AARP
Website	<a href="https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/">https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/</a>
Description	This program provides funding for projects that help cities, towns, and neighborhoods become more livable and age-friendly, with a strong focus on residents 50 and older. The AARP Community Challenge has 3 distinct grant opportunities: Flagship (up to \$15,000), Capacity-Building Microgrants (up to \$2,500), and Demonstration (up to \$25,000)
Project Examples	ADA-compliant features (trails, restrooms, etc.); New amenity construction (event spaces, parks, etc.); Disaster preparedness or resiliency measures (emergency shelters, etc.); Park amenities installation (benches, lighting, public art, etc.); Open space activation (transforming vacant lots into green spaces or community gardens)
Max Award Amount	Varies based on grant type and project
Match Required	25%
Application Deadline	March



**A**

***Appendix A:  
Public Survey***

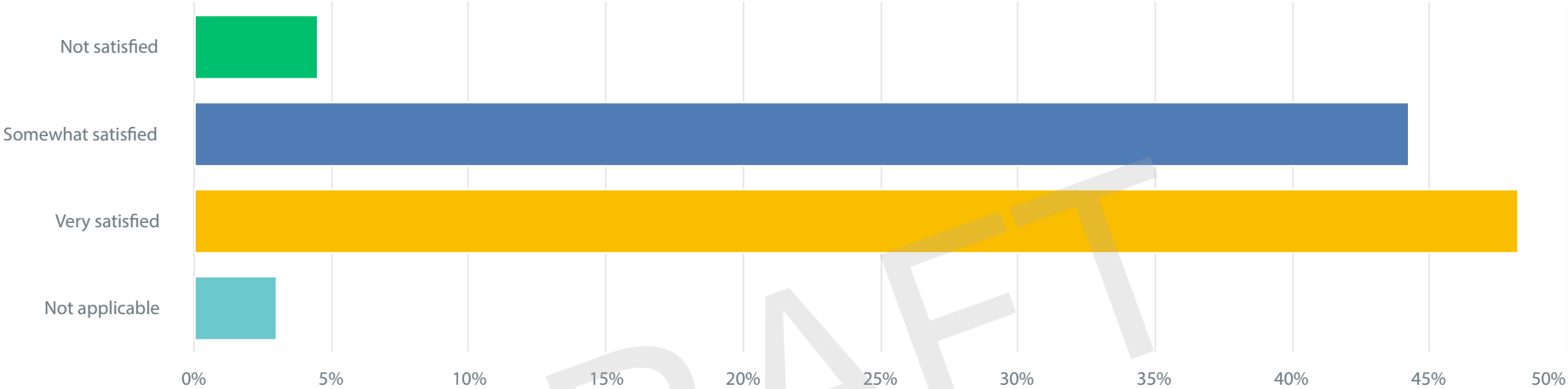
## **Public Survey Responses**

The following summary of 201 public online survey responses informed the recommendations contained in this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

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Q1 199 responses

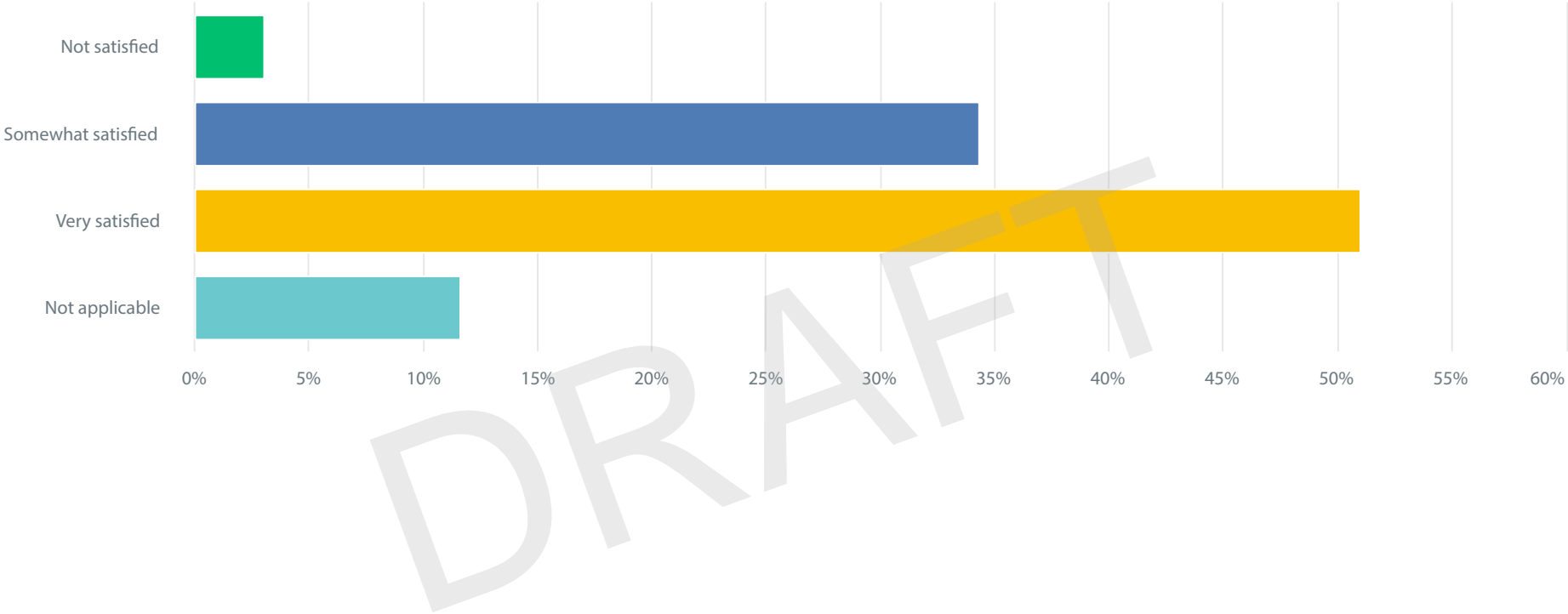
If you have used Dallas’s park facilities within the last 3 years, please indicate your current satisfaction with Dallas’s park facilities.



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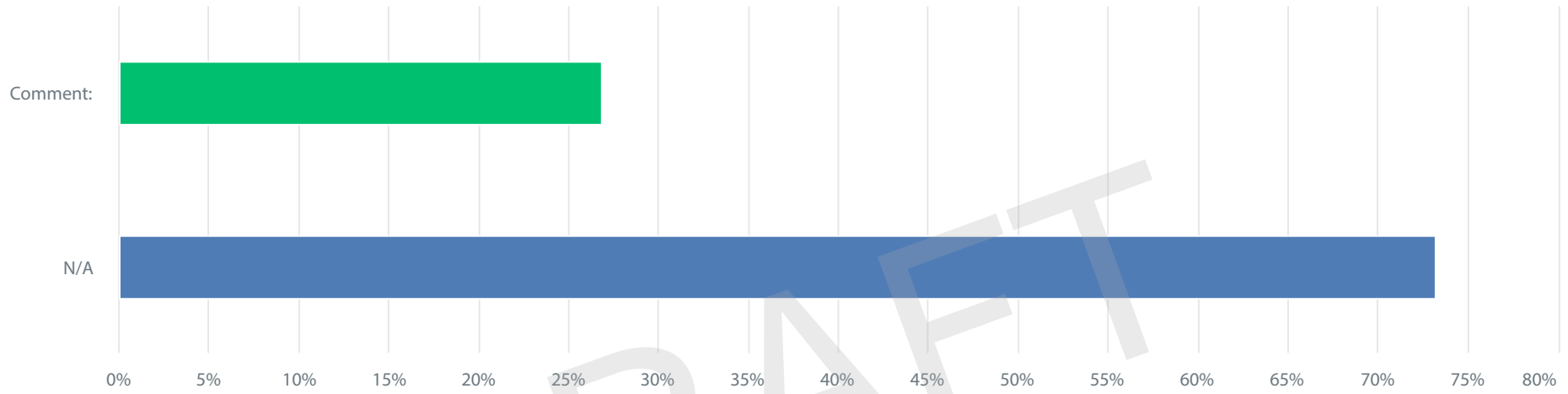
Q2 198 responses

If you have attended Dallas’s recreational programs and special events within the last 3 years, please indicate your satisfaction with the programs and events.



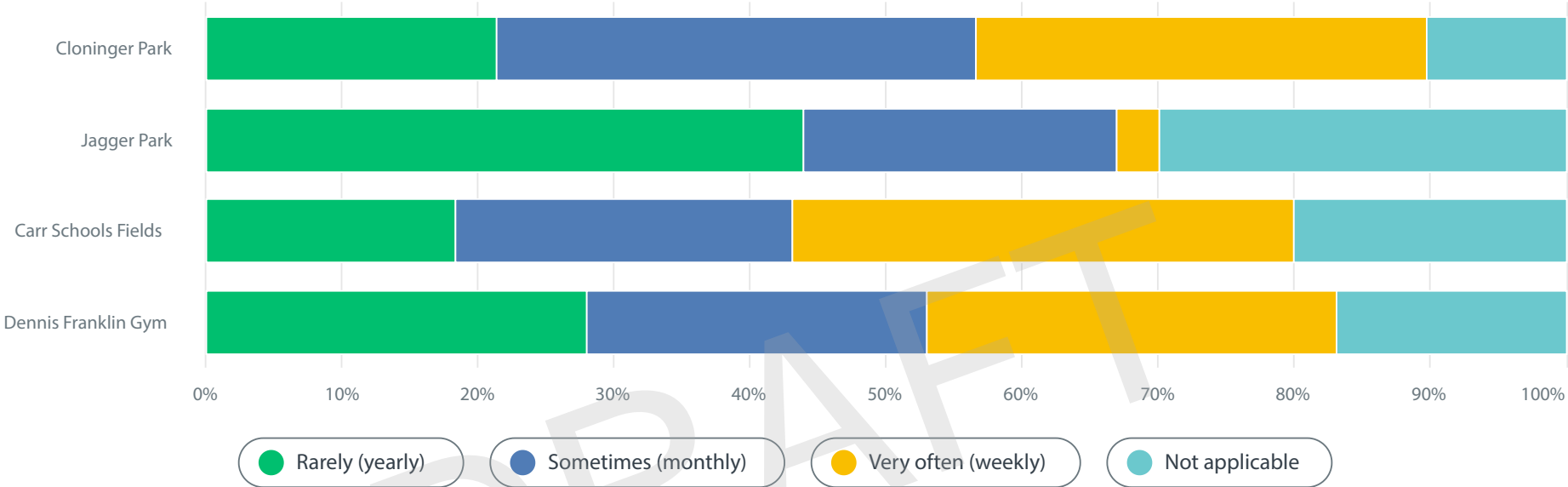
Q3 164 responses

If you were “Not satisfied” with Dallas’s park facilities or programs and special events within the last 3 years, please include a brief description of why.



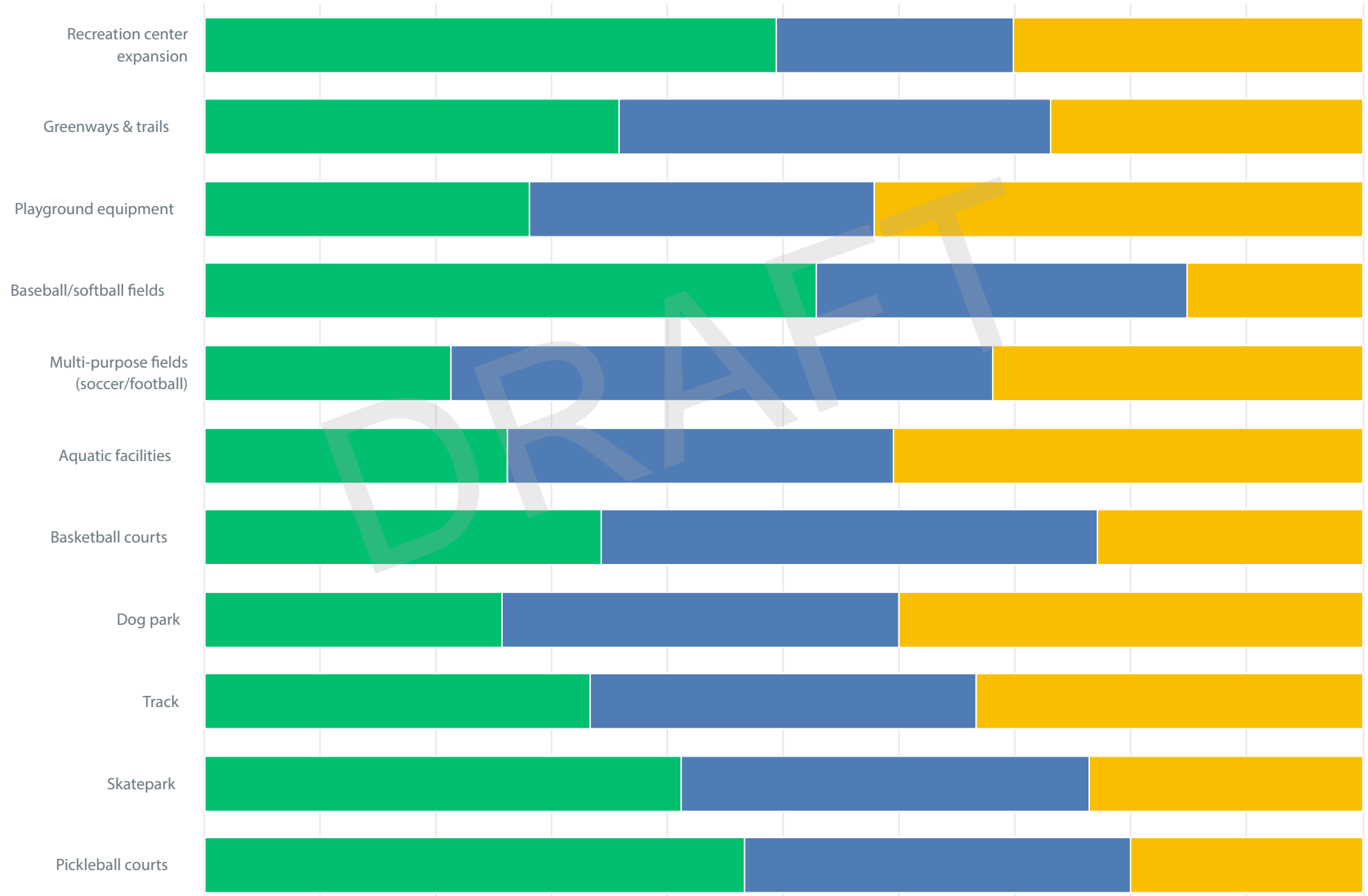
Q4 199 responses

Please indicate how often you or your household have attended the following parks in the Dallas vicinity

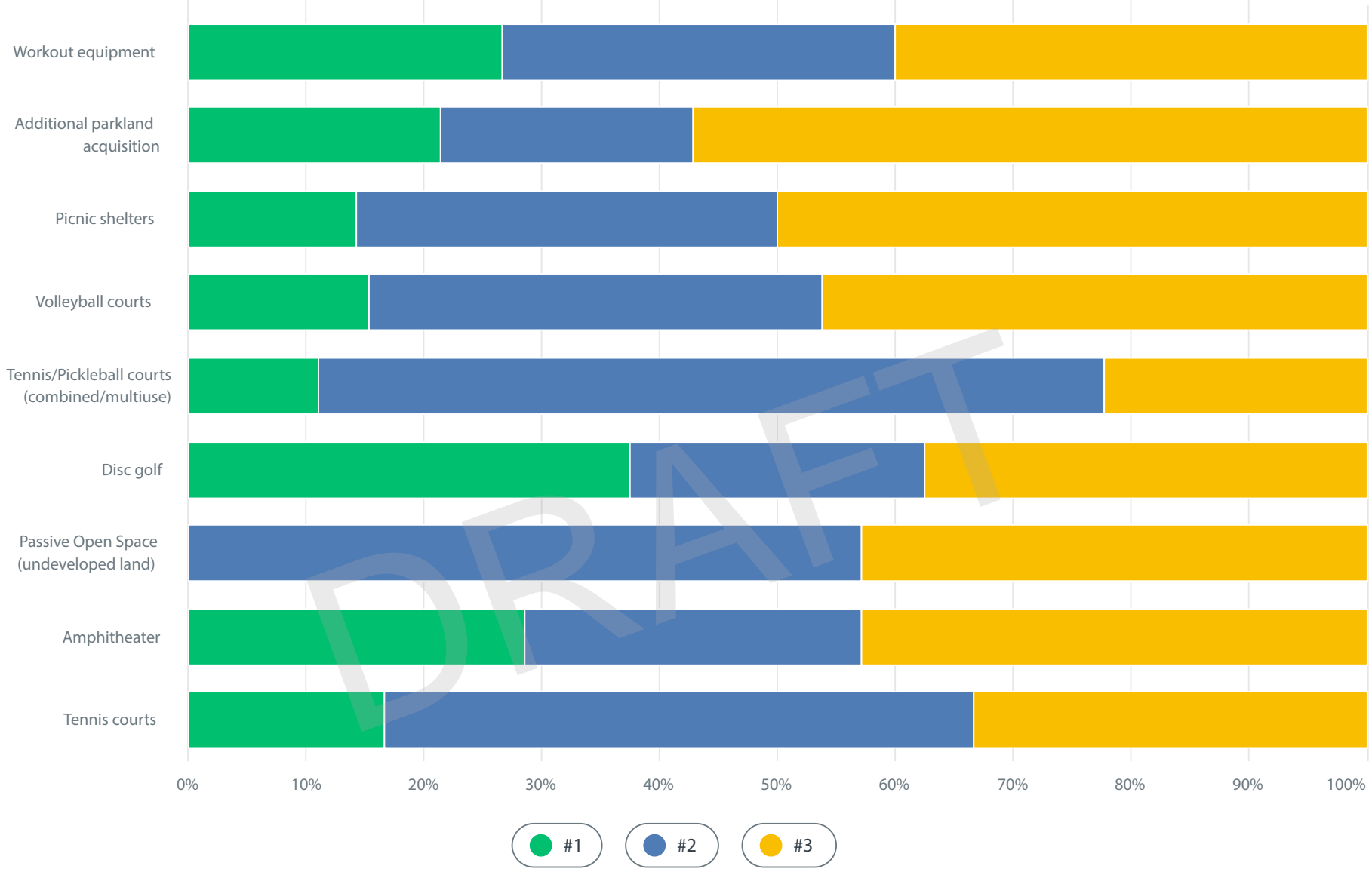


Q5 199 responses

Please indicate your household's top three desired park facilities in Dallas:

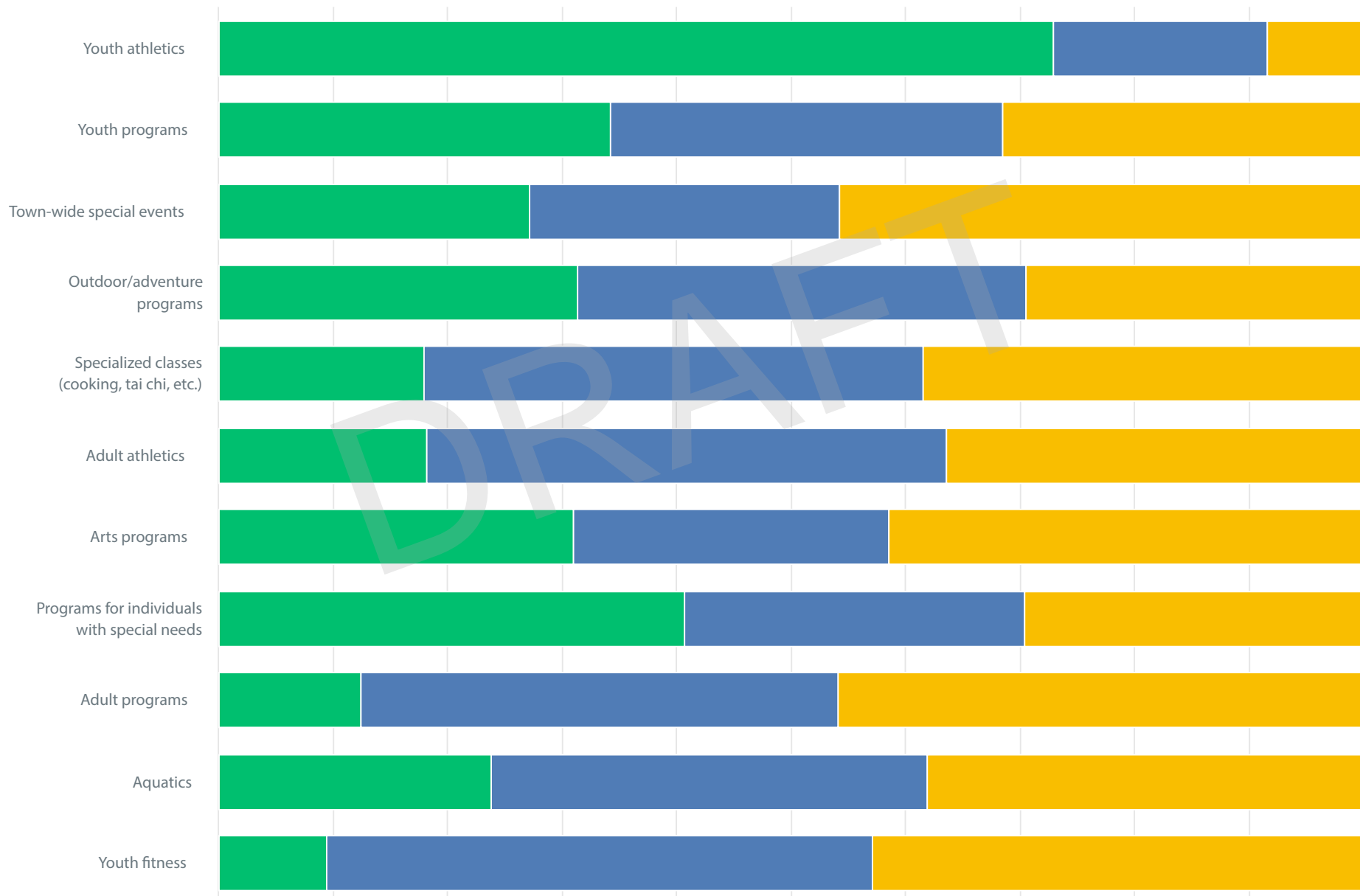


# Town of Dallas Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan

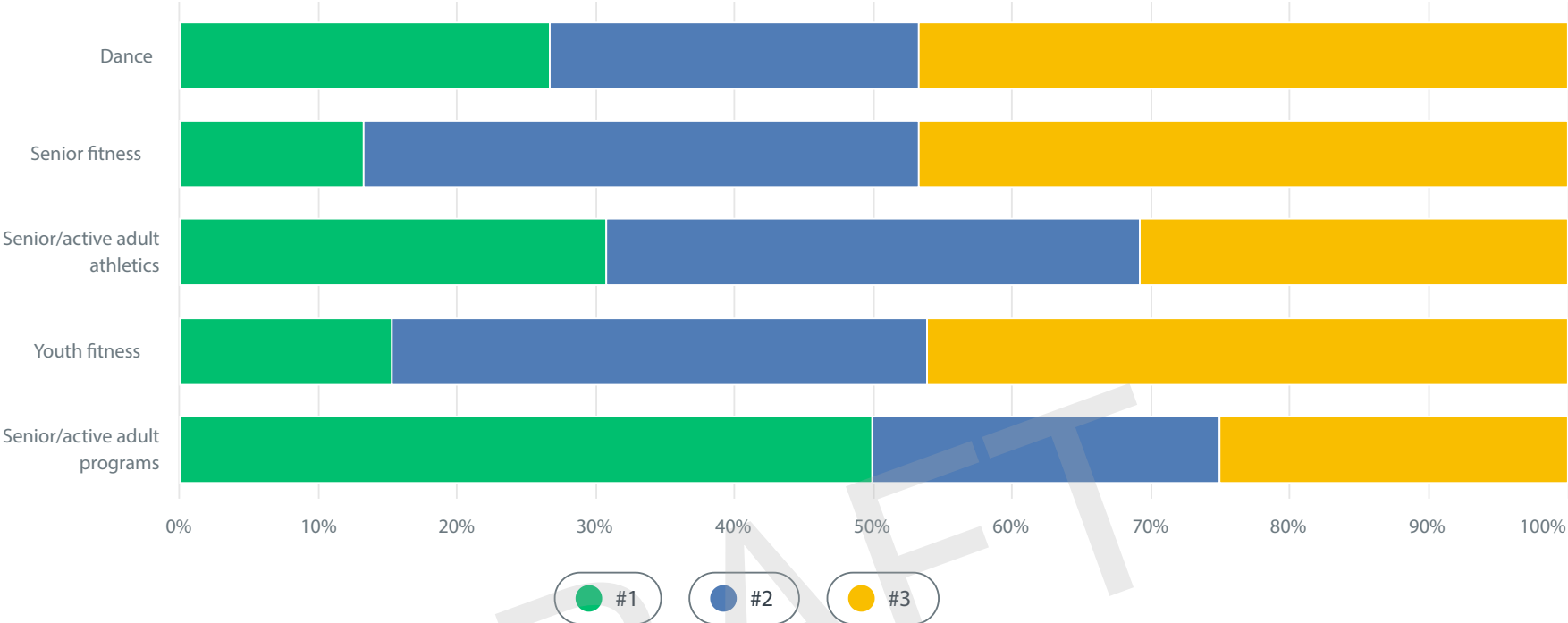


Q6 194 responses

Please indicate your household's top three desired programs for Dallas:

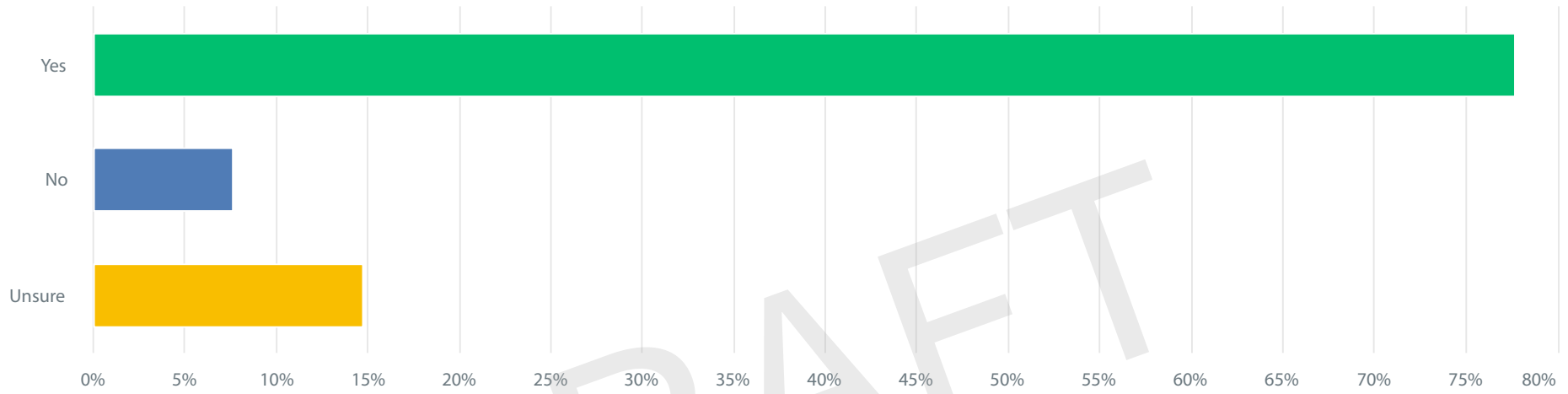


Town of Dallas Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan



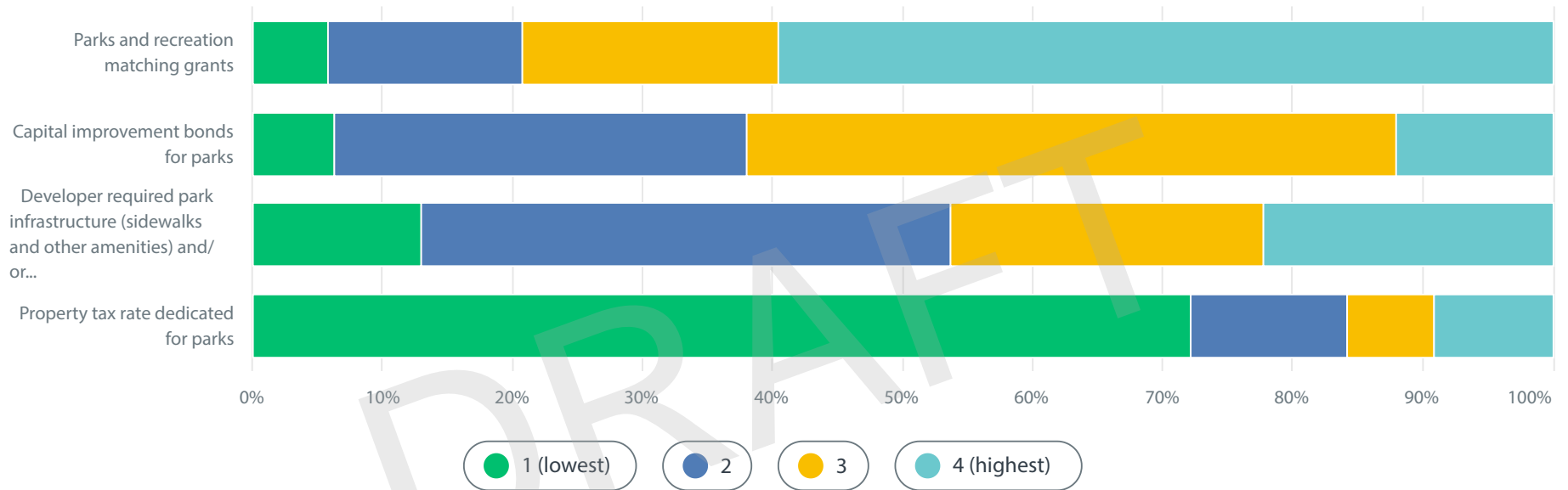
Q7 197 responses

Would you support Dallas securing/acquiring land to develop a Town-wide greenway/trail/sidewalk network that connects parks, community facilities, businesses, and neighborhoods?



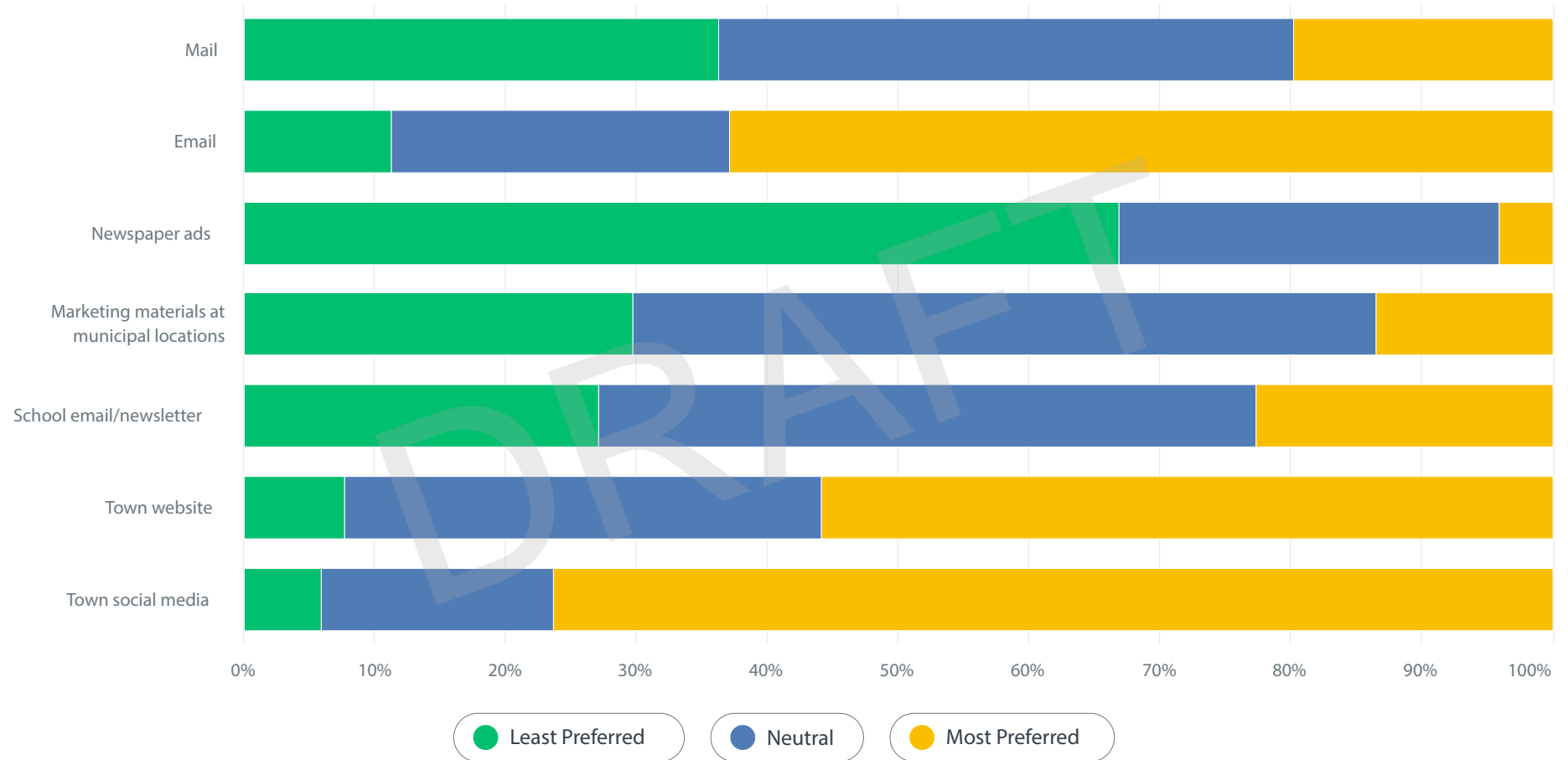
Q8 183 responses

In order to invest in more parks and recreation facilities, the Town of Dallas may require additional funding. Please rank your preferred methods for additional capital funding for recreation and parks 1 through 4 (with 4 being the highest).



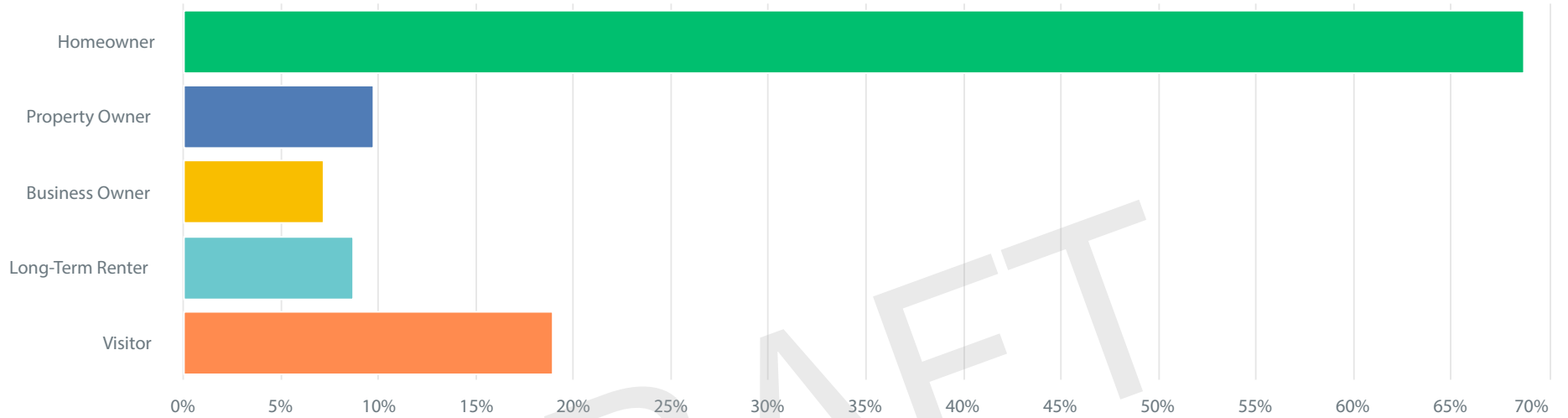
Q9 200 responses

Please rank your preferred methods of receiving information about parks/facilities, recreation programs, and special events held by the Town:



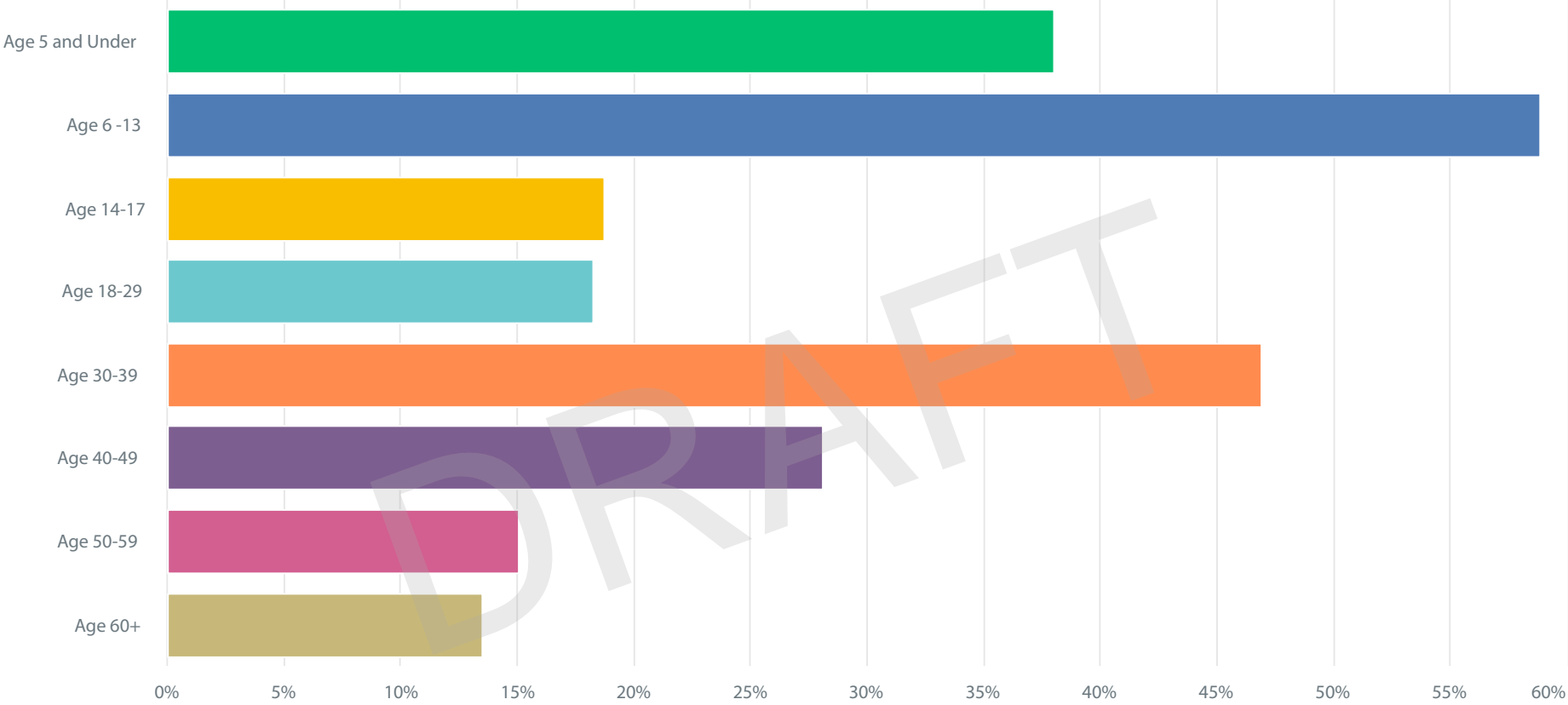
Q10 195 responses

What is your relation to the Town of Dallas? (select all that apply):



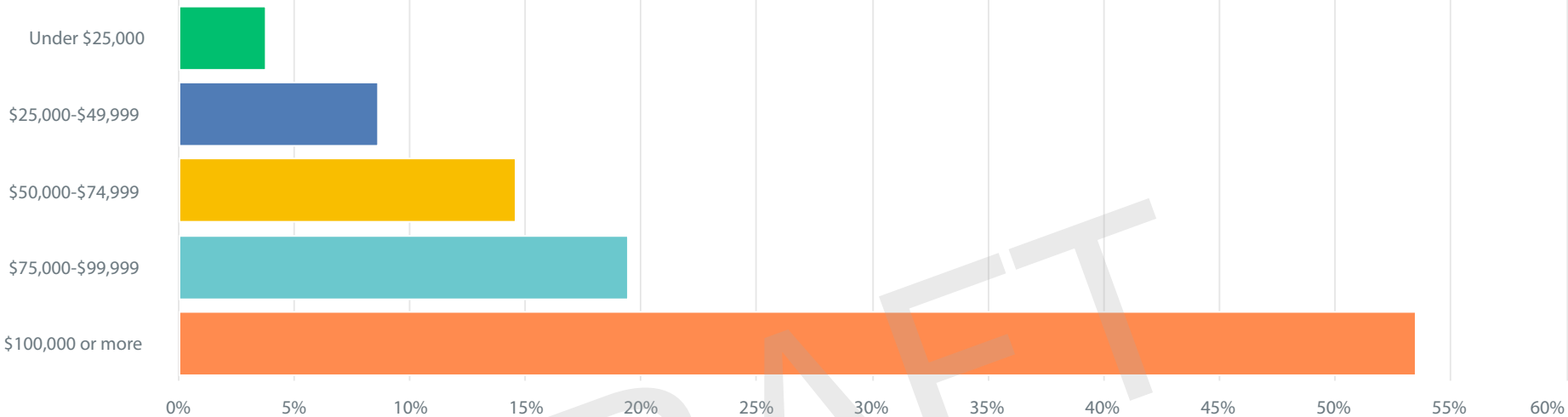
Q11 192 responses

What are the ages of the people in your household? (select all that apply)



Q12 185 responses

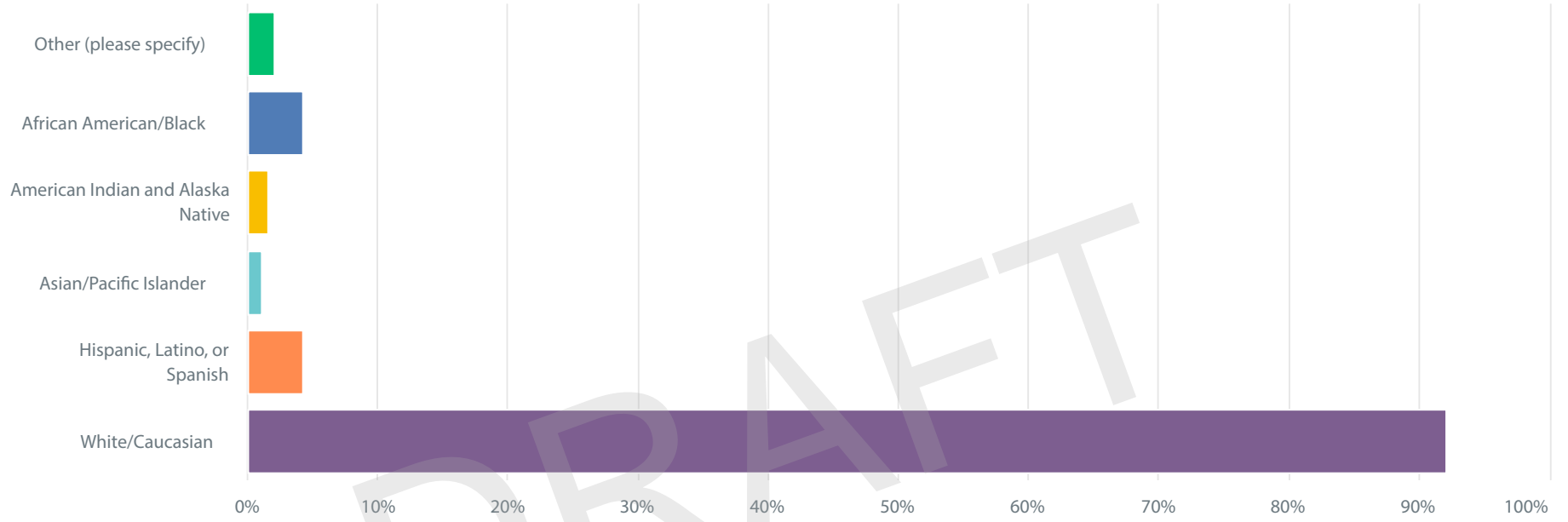
### What is your household income?



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Q13 189 responses

Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply)



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**B**

***Appendix B:  
Sample Waiver***

## **Sample Waiver**

The Town of Dallas can reference the following sample volunteer waiver and release form to create a similar one for the proposed "Friends of Dallas Park" group.

DRAFT



## WAIVER AND RELEASE FORM

### RELEASE OF LIABILITY

In return for being allowed to participate in Town of Burgaw volunteer activities and all related activities, including any activities incidental to such participation ("Volunteer Activities"), the undersigned Volunteer or Parent/Legal Guardian of Volunteer if Volunteer is under age 18 (hereafter referred to using "I", "me", or "my") releases and agrees not to sue the Town of Burgaw or its officers, directors, employees, subcontractors, sponsors, agents and affiliates ("the Town") from all present and future claims that may be made by me, my family, estate, heirs, or assigns for property damage, personal injury, or wrongful death arising as a result of my participation in the Volunteer Activities wherever, whenever, or however the same may occur.

I understand and agree that the Town are not responsible for any injury or property damage arising out of the Volunteer Activities, even if caused by their ordinary negligence or otherwise.

I understand that participation in the Volunteer Activities involves certain risks, including, but not limited to, serious injury and death. I am voluntarily participating in the Volunteer Activities with knowledge of the danger involved and I agree to accept all risks of participation.

I also agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Town for all claims arising out of my participation in the Volunteer Activities.

I understand that this document is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the state in which the Volunteer Activities take place and agree that if any portion of this Agreement is invalid, the remainder will continue in full legal force and effect.

I also acknowledge that the Town have not arranged and do not carry any insurance of any kind for my benefit or that of Volunteer (if Volunteer is under 18), my parents, guardians, trustees, heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns. I represent that, to my knowledge, I am in good health and suffer no physical impairment that would or should prevent my participation in Volunteer Activities.

I also understand that this document is a contract which grants certain rights to and eliminates the liability of the Town.

(Signature of Volunteer) Date

I am of legal age and am freely signing this agreement. I have read this form and understand that by signing this form, I am giving up legal rights and remedies.

(Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian if Volunteer is Under 18) Date

I am the parent or legal guardian of the Volunteer. I am of legal age and am freely signing this agreement. I have read this form and understand that by signing this form, I am giving up legal rights and remedies.



**C**

***Appendix C:  
Fillable Timeline***

## Fillable Timeline

The timeline on the following page can be used by the Town and Dallas Parks & Recreation to track the status of action items. Annual reporting and evaluation of completed and ongoing projects enable the Town to identify implementation challenges, showcase successes, and ensure transparency with the public.

DRAFT

YEAR 1      YEAR 2      YEAR 3      YEAR 4      YEAR 5

 OPERATIONS

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 FACILITIES

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 PROGRAMS

--	--	--	--	--

 POLICY

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Notes:

YEAR 6      YEAR 7      YEAR 8      YEAR 9      YEAR 10


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